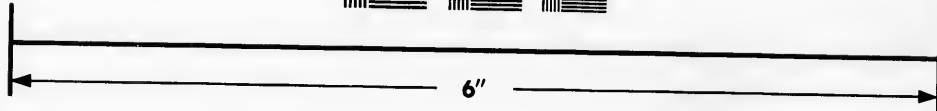
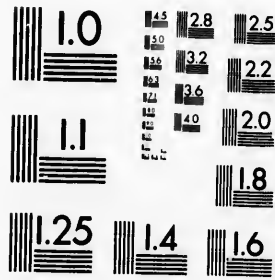


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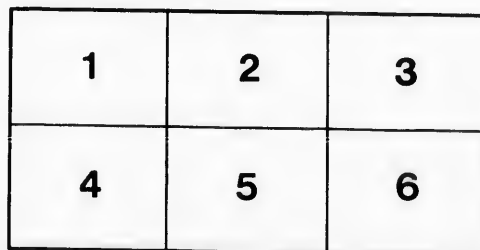
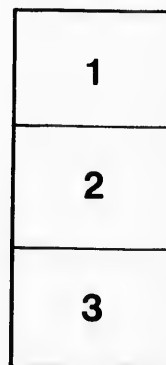
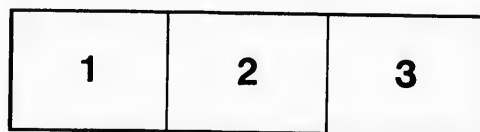
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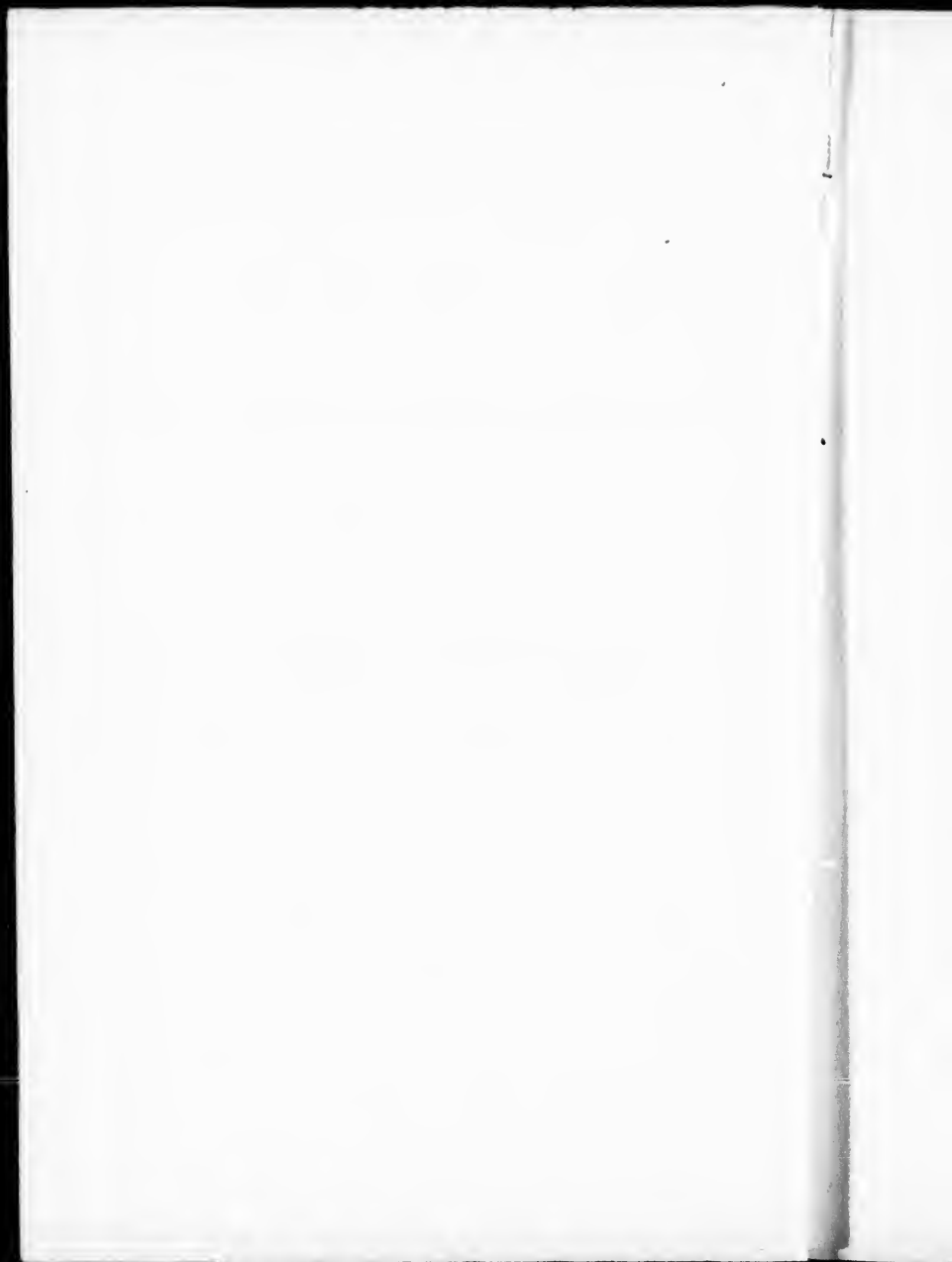
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ROGER OPENS THE TREASURE-HOARD.

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OR, WITH CORTEZ IN MEXICO.

BY

G. A. HENTY,

Author of "With Clive in India;" "The Lion of the North;" "With Lee in Virginia;"
"in Freedom's Cause;" &c.

WITH EIGHT PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. S. STACEY,
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PREFACE.

MY DEAR LADS,

The conquest of Mexico, an extensive empire with a numerous and warlike population, by a mere handful of Spaniards is one of the romances of history; indeed, a writer of fiction would scarcely have dared to invent so improbable a story. Even the bravery of the Spaniards and the advantage of superior arms would not have sufficed to give them the victory, had it not been that Mexico was ripe for disruption. The Aztecs, instead of conciliating by wise and gentle government the peoples they had conquered, treated them with such despotic harshness that they were ready to ally themselves with the invaders, and to join with them heartily against the central power; so that instead of battling against an empire single-handed, the Spaniards had really only to war with a great city, and were assisted by a vast army of auxiliaries.

Fortunately, the details of the extraordinary expedition of Cortez were fully related by contemporary writers, several of whom were eye-witnesses of the scenes they described. It was not necessary for me, however, to revert to these, as Prescott in his admirable work on the conquest of Mexico has given a summary of them, and has drawn a most vivid picture of the events of the campaign. The book far surpasses in interest any volume of fiction, and I should strongly recommend my readers to take the first opportunity that occurs of perusing the whole story, of which I have only been able to

touch upon the principal events. While history is silent as to the voyage of the *Swan*, it is recorded by the Spaniards that an English ship did in 1517 or 1518 appear off the port of San Domingo, and was fired at by them, and chased from the islands; but it was not until some twenty or thirty years later that the English bucaniers openly sailed to challenge the supremacy of the Spaniards among the Western Islands, and to dispute their pretensions to exclude all other flags but their own from those waters. It may, however, be well believed that the ship spoken of was not the only English craft that entered the Spanish main, and that the adventurous traders of the West country more than once despatched ships to carry on an illicit trade there. Such enterprises would necessarily be conducted with great secrecy until the relations between Spain and England changed, and religious differences broke up the alliance that existed between them during the early days of Henry VIII.

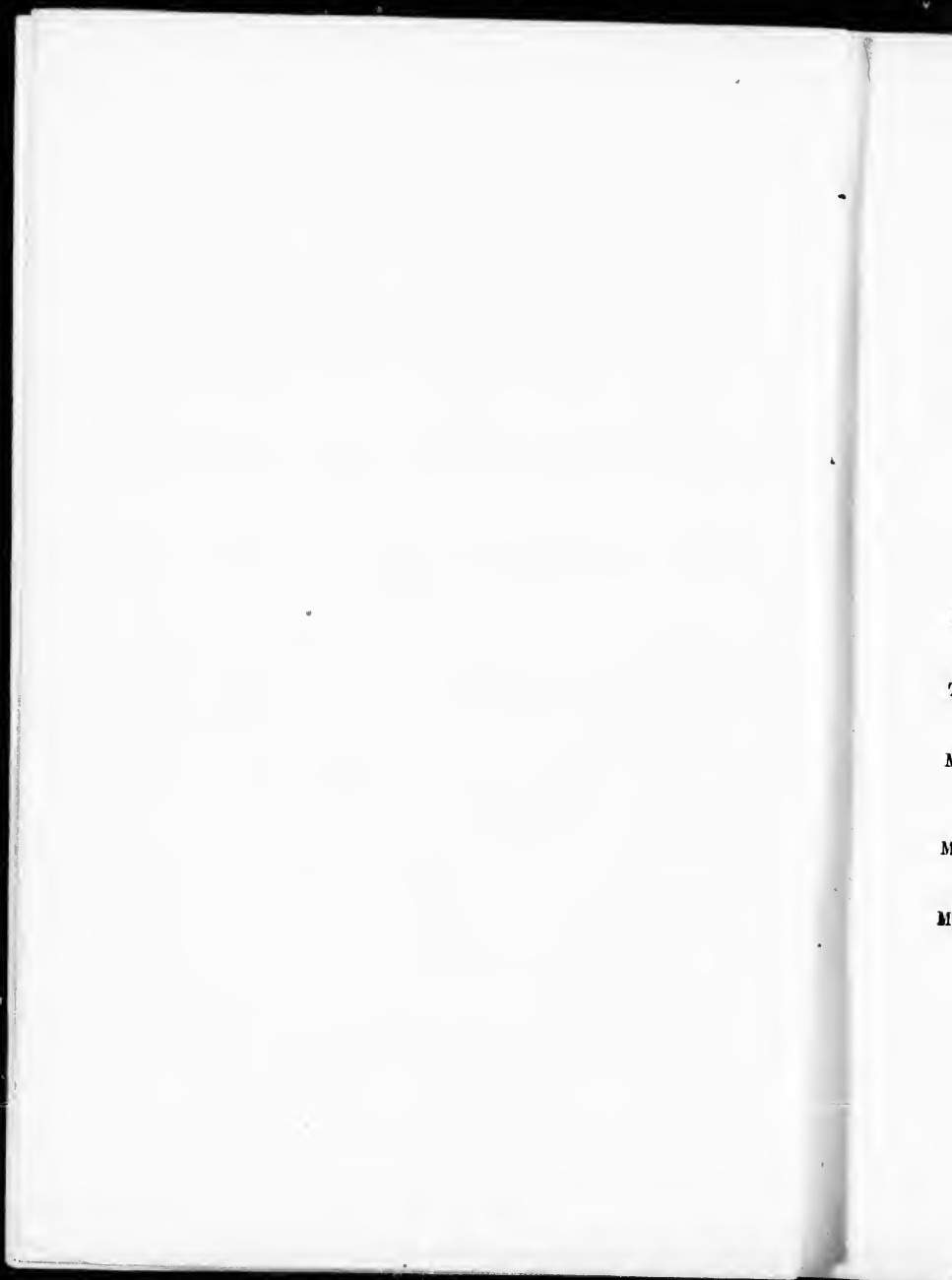
Yours very sincerely,

G. A. HENTY.

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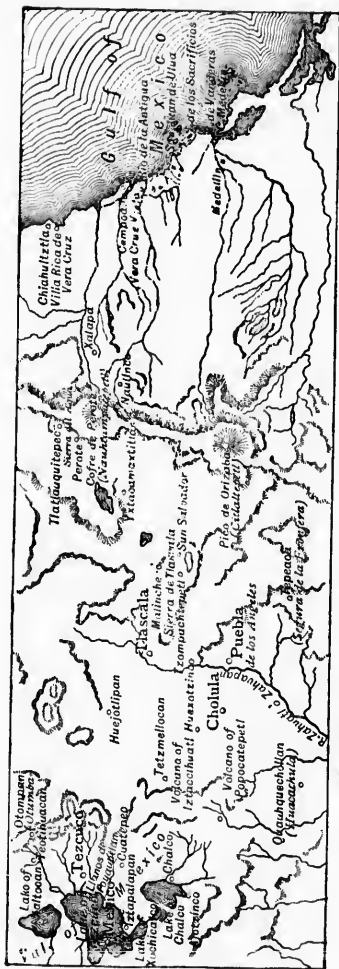


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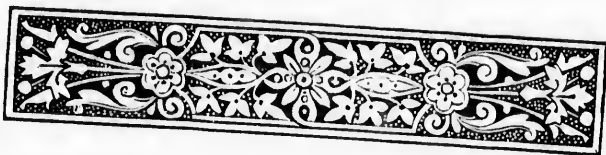
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CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING PROPOSAL.

ON March 3rd, 1516, the trading vessel, the *Swan*, dropped anchor at Plymouth. She would in our days be considered a tiny craft indeed, but she was then looked upon as a large vessel, and one of which her owner, Master Diggory Beggs, had good reason to be proud. She was only of some eighty tons burden, but there were few ships that sailed out from Plymouth of much larger size; and Plymouth was even then rising into importance as a seaport, having flourished mightily since the downfall of its once successful rival—Fowey. Large ships were not needed in those days, for the only cargoes sent across the sea were costly and precious goods which occupied but small space. The cloths of the Flemings, the silks and satins of Italy, the produce of the East, which passed first through the hands of the Venetian and Genoese merchants, and the wines of France and Spain—were the chief articles of commerce. Thus the freight for a vessel of eighty tons was a heavy venture, and none but merchants of wealth and position would think of employing larger ships.

In this respect the Spaniards and the Italian Republics were far ahead of us, and the commerce of England was a

small thing indeed in comparison with that of Flanders. In Plymouth, however, the *Swan* was regarded as a goodly ship; and Master Diggory Beggs was heartily congratulated by his acquaintances when the news came that the *Swan* was sailing up the Sound, having safely returned from a voyage to Genoa. As soon as the anchor was dropped and the sails were furled, the captain, Reuben Hawkshaw, a cousin of Master Beggs, took his place in the boat, accompanied by his son Roger, a lad of sixteen, and was rowed by two sailors to the landing-place.

They were delayed for a few minutes there by the number of Reuben's acquaintances, who thronged round to shake him by the hand; but as soon as he had freed himself of these he strode up the narrow street from the quays to the house of Master Diggory. Reuben Hawkshaw was a tall, powerfully-built man, weather-beaten and tanned from his many comings and goings upon the sea; with a voice that could be heard in the loudest storm, and a fierce look—but, as his men knew, gentle and kind at heart, though very daring, and having, as it seemed, no fear of danger either from man or tempest. Roger was large boned and loosely jointed, and was likely some day to fill out into as big a man as his father, who stood over six-foot-two without his shoes.

Reuben was wont to complain that he himself was too big for shipboard.

"If a crew were men wholly of my size," he would say, "a ship would be able to carry but a scant crew; for, lie they as close as they would, there would not be room for a full complement below." For indeed in those days space was precious, and on board a ship men were packed well-nigh as close as they could lie, having small thought of comfort, and being well content if there was room to turn without angering those lying next on either side.

The merchant, who was so stout and portly that he offered a strong contrast to his cousin, rose from his desk as the latter entered.

"I am glad indeed to see you back, Cousin Reuben; and trust that all has fared well with you."

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"Indifferent well, Cousin Diggory. We have a good stock of Italian goods on board; but as, of course, these took up but a small portion of her hold I put into Cadiz on my way back. There I filled up with three-score barrels of Spanish wine, which will, I warrant me, return good profit on the price I paid for them."

"And you have met with no accidents or adventures, Reuben?"

"Not more than is useful. We had a fight with some Moorish pirates, who coveted the goods with which, as they doubtless guessed, we were laden; but we beat them off stontly with a loss of only six men killed among us. We had bad weather coming up the Portugal Coast, and had two men washed overboard; and we had another stabbed in a drunken brawl in the street. And besides these there are of course many who were wounded in the fight with the Moors and in drunken frays ashore, but all are doing well, and the loss of a little blood will not harm them, so our voyage may be termed an easy and pleasant one."

"That is well," the merchant said, in a tone of satisfaction.

"We cannot expect a voyage like this to pass without accident. And how are you, Roger?" he asked, turning to the boy, who was standing near the door with his cap in his hand until it should please his elders to address him.

"I am well, I thank you, Master Diggory. It is seldom that anything ails with me. I trust that Mistress Mercy and my cousins are well."

"You had best go upstairs, and see them for yourself, Roger. Your father and I have weighty matters to talk over, and would fain be alone."

Roger was glad to escape from the merchant's counting-house; and bowing to his cousin, went off with a quiet step, which, after he had closed the door behind him, was changed into a rapid bound as he ascended the stairs.

"Gently, Roger," Mistress Beggs said, as he entered the room where she and her two daughters were sitting at work.

"We are truly glad to see you, but you must remember that

we stay-at-home people are not accustomed to the boisterous ways of the sea."

The reproof was administered in a kindly tone, but Roger coloured to the hair; for, indeed, in his delight at being back again, he had forgotten the manners that were expected from a lad of his age on shore. However, he knew that although Mistress Beggs was somewhat precise in her ways, she was thoroughly kind, and always treated him as if he were a nephew of her own rather than a young cousin of her husband's. He therefore recovered at once from his momentary confusion, and stepped forward to receive the salute Mistress Beggs always gave him on his return from his voyages.

"Dorothy, Agnes, you remember your Cousin Roger?" The two girls who had remained seated at their work—which had however made but little progress since their father had run in two hours before to say that the *Swan* was signalled in the Scound—now rose and each made a formal courtesy, and then held up her cheek to be kissed, according to the custom of the day; but there was a little smile of amusement on their faces that would have told a close observer that had their mother not been present their greeting would have been a warmer and less ceremonious one.

"Well, well, Roger," Mistress Beggs went on, "it is marvellous to see how fast you grow! Why, it is scarce six months since you sailed away, and you seem half a head taller than you were when you went! And so the *Swan* has returned safely without damage or peril?"

"No damage to speak of, Cousin Mercy, save for a few shot-holes in her hull, and a good many patches on her side—the work of a Moorish corsair with whom we had a sharp brush by the way."

"And was there loss of life, Roger?"

"We have come back nine hands shorter than we sailed with, and there are a few on board still unfit for hard work."

"And did you fight, Cousin Roger?" Dorothy Beggs asked.

"I did what I could with my bow until I got alongside, and

then joined in the *mêlée* as well as I could. The heathen fought bravely, but they were not a match for our men, being wanting in weight and strength, and little able to stand up against the crushing blows of our axes. But they are nimble and quick with their curved swords, and the fierceness of their faces and their shouting would have put men out of countenance who had less reason to be confident than ours.

"And the trading has gone well?" asked Mistress Beggs, who was known to have a keen eye to the main chance.

"I believe that my father's well satisfied, Cousin Mercy, and that the venture has turned out fully as well as he looked for."

"That is well, Roger. Do you girls go on with your work. You can sew while you are listening. I will go and see that the preparations for dinner are going on regularly, for the maids are apt to give way to talk and gossip when they know that the *Swan* is in."

As soon as she had left the room, the two girls threw down their work, and running across to Roger saluted him most heartily.

"That is a much better welcome," Roger said, "than the formal greetings you before gave me. I wonder what Cousin Mercy would have said had she chanced to come in again."

"Mother guessed well enough what it would be when we were alone together," Dorothy said, laughing. She always thinks it right on special occasions to keep us to our manners, and to make us sure that we know how it is becoming to behave; but you know well, Roger, that she is not strict with us generally, and likes us to enjoy ourselves. When we are staying up at the farm with Aunt Peggy, she lets us run about as we will, and never interferes with us save when our spirits carry us away altogether. I think we should be glad if we always lived in the country. But now, Roger, let us hear much more about your voyage and the fight with the Moors. Are they black men?"

"Not at all, Dorothy. They are not very much darker than our own fishermen when they are bronzed by the sun and wind. There are black men who live somewhere near their

country, and there were several of these fighting with them. These blacks are bigger men than the Moors, and have thick lips and wide mouths. I believe that they live as slaves among the Moors, but those who were with them fought as bravely as they did, and it needed a man with a stout heart to engage with them, so ugly were their faces."

"Were you not terrified, Roger?"

"I was frightened at first, Dorothy, and felt a strange weakness in my knees as they began to swarm up the ship's side, but it passed off when the scuffle began. You see there was no time to think about it. We all had to do our best, and even had I been frightened ever so badly, I hope that I should not have showed it, for it would have brought shame upon my father as well as myself; but in truth I thought little about it one way or the other. There they were on the deck, and had to be driven back again, and we set about the work like Englishmen and honest men; and, thanks to our pikes and axes, we had not very much trouble about it, especially when we once became fairly angered on seeing some of our friends undone by the heathen. I myself would rather go through two or three such fights than encounter such another storm as we had off the coast of Portugal for four days. It seemed that we must be lost, the waves were of such exceeding bigness—far surpassing anything I had ever seen before. My heart was in my mouth scores of times, and over and over again I thought that she would never rise again, so great was the weight of water that poured over her. Truly it was the mercy of God which alone saved us, for I believe that even my father thought the ship would be beaten to pieces, though he kept up a show of confidence in order to inspirit the men. However, at the end of the fourth day the gale abated, but it was days before the great sea went down, the waves coming in long regular hills which seemed to me as big as those which we have here in Devonshire, but smooth and regular, so that while we rolled mightily there was nought to fear from them.

"I should not like to be a sailor," Agnes said. "It would be far better, Roger, were you to come into our father's counting-

house. You know he would take you into his business did Cousin Reuben desire it."

Roger laughed. "I should make but a poor penman, Agnes; I love the sea dearly, and it is seldom that we have such galos to meet as that, and after all it is no worse to be drowned than it is to come to any other death. I am well content, cousin, with matters as they are, and would not stay ashore and spend my life in writing not to be as rich as the greatest merchant in Plymouth. I almost wish sometimes I had been born a Spaniard or a Portugal, for then I might have a chance of sailing to wondrous new countries, instead of voyaging only in European waters.

"It seems to me that you have plenty to see as it is, Roger," Dorothy said.

"I do not say nay to that," Roger assented; "but I do not see why Spain and Portugal should claim all the Indies, East and West, and keep all others from going there."

"But the pope has given the Indies to them," Dorothy said.

"I don't see that they were the pope's to give," Roger replied.

"That might do for the king and his minister Wolsey and the bishops, but when in time all the people have read as we do, Master Wycliffe's Bible, they will come to see that there is no warrant for the authority the pope claims, and then we may perhaps take our share of these new discoveries."

"Hush, Roger! You should not speak so loud about the Bible. You know that though there are many who read it, it is not a thing to be spoken of openly, and that it would bring us all into sore trouble were anyone to hear us speak so freely as you have done. There has been burning of Lollards, and they say that Wolsey is determined to root out all the followers of Wycliffe."

"It will take him some trouble to do that," Roger said, shrugging his shoulders. "Still I will be careful, Dorothy, for I would not on any account bring trouble upon you here. But, thank Heaven, England is not Spain, where men are for ever being tortured and burned for their religion. The English would never put up with that. It may be that there

will be persecution, but methinks it is rather those whose opinions lead them to make speeches that are regarded as seditious, and who stir up the people into discontent who fall into trouble; and that as long as folks hold their own opinions in peace and quiet, and trouble not others, neither king nor cardinal will seek to interfere with them. It is not so in Spain: there, upon the slightest suspicion that a man or woman holds views differing from those of the priests, he is dragged away and thrown into the prisons of the Inquisition, and tortured and burned."

Mistress Mercy now returned, and she and the girls busied themselves in laying the table for dinner.

That evening, after Mistress Mercy, the girls, and Roger had retired to bed, Reuben Hawkshaw and his cousin had a long talk together, concerning the next voyage of the *Swan*. After Master Diggory had discussed the chances of a voyage to the low countries, or another trip to the Mediterranean, Reuben, who had been silently listening to him, said: "Well, Cousin Diggory, to tell you the truth I have been turning over a project that seems to me to offer a chance of greater profit, though I deem it not without risk. That is the case, of course, with all trading affairs; and, as you know, the greater the risk the greater the profit, so the question to be considered is whether the profit is in fair proportion to the risk run. I think that it is in this case, and I am ready to risk my life in carrying it out; it is for you to consider whether you are ready to risk your venture."

"What is it, Reuben? There are no other voyages that I know of, unless, indeed, you think of sailing up to Constantinople and trading with the Grand Turk."

"My thoughts go farther afield still, Diggory. It is a matter I have thought over for some time, and when I was at Cadiz the other day I made many enquiries, and these have confirmed me in my opinions on the matter. You know that the Spaniards are gaining huge wealth from the Indies, and I heard at Cadiz that after the conquest they made a year since of the island they call Cuba, the stores of precious things

brought home were vast indeed. As you know, they bring from there gold and spices and precious woods, and articles of native workmanship of all kinds."

"I know all that, Reuben, and also that, like dogs in the manger, they suffer none others to sail those seas, and that no English ship has ever yet traversed those waters."

"That is so, Diggory; but by all I hear the number of islands is large, and there are reports that there lies farther west a great land from which it is they procure chiefly the gold and silver and precious things. Now it seems to me that were the matter secretly conducted, so that no news could be sent to Spain, a ship might slip out and cruise there, dealing with the natives, and return richly stored with treasures.

"The *Swan* is a fast sailer, and did she fall in with the Spanish ships would show them a clean pair of heels. Of course she would avoid the places where the Spaniards have forts and garrisons, and touch only at those at which I hear they trade but little;" and he took out a scroll from his bosom, unrolled it, and showed it to be a map. "This I purchased, for ten gold pieces, of a Spanish captain who had come to poverty and disgrace from his ship being cast away while he was asleep in liquor in his cabin—a fault which is rare among the Spaniards, and therefore thought all the more of. I met him in Cadiz at a wine-shop near the port; he told me his story as we drank together, for he spoke Dutch, having traded much with the Low Countries.

"He took out a map, to show me some of the places at which he had had adventures. I said that the thing was curious, and would buy it of him if he was disposed to sell. He said that it would be as much as his life were worth to part with it to an Englishman; and, indeed, that it was only captains of ships trading in those seas who were allowed to have them, seeing that all matters connected with the islands were held as a State secret. After some trouble and chaffering, however, he agreed to make me an exact copy, and to sell it me for ten gold pieces. This is the copy; it is exact, for I compared it with the original before I paid for it. Now, here you see are

laid down the position and bearing of all the islands, together with all the ports and places where the Spaniards have their settlements.

"This line over here represents the mainland, but it is, as you see, but vaguely drawn, seeing that except at one or two points the Spaniards themselves have but little knowledge of it. Now it seems that with the help of this I might so navigate the *Swan* as to avoid much risk of falling in with the Dons; and might yet make a shift to fill up the ship with goods of all kinds such as would sell here for great prices. I know, of course, that were we taken we should be kil'ed without mercy; but in the first place they would have to catch us, which would not be easy, and in the second to capture us, which, methinks would be more difficult still, seeing that a crew of stout Devonshire lads, fighting with halters round their necks, would give a good account of themselves even if overhauled by a great Spanish galleon. What think you of the scheme, Cousin Diggory?"

"It is a perilous one, certainly, Roger," the merchant replied, after a long silence. "There is the risk of the loss of the ship and all her freight, and there is the risk of the loss of your life and of those of the crew, and I would rather lose even the *Swan*, Reuben, than that harm should come to you and Roger. Then it may well be that, even if you carried the scheme to a successful end, and returned laden with wealth, the king and his counsellors, when the matter came to their ears—which it would be sure to do on your return, for it would make a prodigious talk—might be grievously offended, accuse us of embroiling England with Spain, confiscate the cargo, visit me with fine and imprisonment, and treat you and the crew as pirates."

"I do not fear that," Reuben said; "our relations with Spain have grown cold lately, and there is a talk of peace between us and France. In the next place I should say that the king would be mightily glad to see a chance of us English having a finger in this pie that the Spaniards want to keep to themselves; and that he will perceive that great advantage

will arise from our obtaining a share of the trade with the Indies. There is a rare jealousy in the country at the Spaniards and Portugals keeping all the trade of both the Indies in their hands; and methinks that even if he judged it necessary to make a show of displeasure against the men who led the way in this matter, there would in the end be much honour as well as profit in this venture."

"It is a grave matter, Reuben, and one not to be undertaken without much thought and calculation. Still I own that the proposal is a tempting one, and that the possession of this map, which I will examine at my leisure, would help you much in your enterprise. Truly, as you say, although the king might frown, there would be much honour as well as profit in being the first English merchant to despatch a ship to the Spanish main. I love not the Spaniards, and, like all Englishmen who think as I do on matters of religion, have viewed with much disfavour our alliance with men who are such cruel persecutors of all who are not of their religion."

"I hate them," Reuben Hawkshaw said, energetically. "They swagger as if they were the lords of the world, and hold all others as of no account beside them. If you resolve on this enterprise I shall, of course, do my utmost to avoid them; but should they try to lay hand on us I shall be right glad to show them that we Englishmen hold ourselves fully a match for them."

"Well, well, we must not think of that," Diggory Beggs said hastily; "but, nevertheless, cousin, if the *Swan* sails for those seas I will see that she is well provided with ordnance and small arms, so that she shall be able to hold her own with those who would meddle with her."

"That is all I ask, Diggory. We sha'n't meddle with them if they do not meddle with us; but if they treat us as pirates, to beslain without form of trial, they must not blame us if we act as pirates when they come upon us. They hold that they are beyond the law when they are once beyond sight of land, going westward; and we have only to take them at their word. As to piracy, if the things that are whispered as to their

cruelty to the natives be true, pirates are an innocent and kindly folk compared to them. They openly proclaim that all found in these seas, which they claim as their own, will be treated as enemies and slain without mercy; and we shall be therefore fully justified in treating as an enemy any Spanish ship that we may come across, and holding her as a fair prize, if we are strong enough to take her."

"But you must not go out with that intent, Reuben. If I fit out the *Swan* to go to the Indies it is that she may trade honestly with such natives as are ready to trade with her, and not that she may wage war against the Spaniards."

"I quite understand that, Cousin Diggory," Reuben Hawkshaw said with a grim smile; "and that also is my intent, if the Spaniards will but let me adhere to it: only if we are attacked we must defend ourselves. If they try to capture us, and we beat them, it is but natural that we should capture them."

"Against that I have nothing to say, Reuben, I can find no authority in Scripture for the Spaniards claiming a portion of the seas as their right. The world is all, as it seems to me, open to trade, and neither the pope nor anyone else has a right to parcel it out for the exclusive use of one or two nations. As we all know, the seas within a mile or two of shore are held to belong naturally to those who own the land; but that is a different thing altogether to holding that more than half the seas, in as much as we know of them, are to be held as private property by Spaniards and Portugals. Well, we will say no more about it at present, there is plenty of time to think it over while the *Swan* is unloading. I certainly do not like to take so great a risk as this would be on my own shoulders, but if I could get two or three others to join me I should be willing enough to embark upon it."

"I need not tell you, Diggory, that it behoves you to be right careful as to those to whom you may broach it. Remember that an incautious word might ruin the enterprise altogether. If so much as a whisper of it reached the ear of the Spanish ambassador in London, he would apply to the king to put a stop to it; and whatever King Harry might think of it he

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could hardly permit the *Swan* to sail in the face of such a remonstrance, for to do so would assuredly embroil him with Spain."

"I will be careful, Reuben; for I see this as well as you do, and shall only speak to men who have before now worked with me in joint adventures, and on whose discretion I can surely rely. I will talk the matter over with them, Reuben, first; and if they appear favourably disposed, you shall meet them here, show them your map, and explain your intentions fully to them. If three others join me in equal shares, I shall propose that, as it is your idea, and as you have obtained this map, you shall have an equal share with each of us in the business, and shall in addition to your pay as master, take one-fifth of the profits after payment of expenses. Will that content you?"

"Right well, Cousin Diggory; and from this moment I shall, I can tell you, regard myself as a rich man."

The unloading of the *Swan* occupied some time: there was no undue haste in those days. The bales were hoisted by whips from the hold, and then carried up to Master Beggs' warehouse. The sailors had earned a fair time for repose after the hardships of the voyage, and took matters easily, and it was more than a week before the *Swan's* hold was empty. During that time the merchant had not made any allusion to Reuben, as to their conversation on the evening after the *Swan* came into port. But Reuben was neither surprised nor anxious at this silence; he knew that his cousin although an enterprising was a cautious man, and had hardly hoped to find his proposal so favourably entertained. He had looked for absolute refusal at first, and expected that he would only arrive at his end after long disputes and discussion. Therefore he doubted not that Diggory was turning the matter over and over in his mind, settling the details, and perhaps broaching the matter to the merchants he had spoken of.

The *Swan* once empty was laid up on the shore, where she dried at low tide, so that she could have her seams caulked, and a coat of pitch laid on below the water-line, and be made

tight and sound for any voyage on which she might be despatched. Reuben Hawkshaw had lost his wife years before, and when in port at Plymouth always occupied lodgings in a house a short distance from that of his cousin, spending his evenings mostly at Master Diggory's, but refusing to take his breakfast or dinner there.

"I know what is what, cousin," he would say, when the merchant pressed him and Roger to come to breakfast or dinner. "Women are women, and, as is only right, they hold to the nicety of things; and nothing displeases them more than for people to come in late for their meals. When I am at work I work, and if when the clock strikes the hour for meals I am in the middle of a job I see that it is finished before the men knock off. Then there is the matter of washing and cleaning up, for one gathers much dust and dirt in the hold of a ship, so that, do what I would, Roger and I could never reckon upon being punctual, and the matter would weigh on my mind when I ought to be thinking of other things. No, no, Diggory, we will be free men, taking our bite and sup on board, as we can make shift to get them, and then when work is over, coming with clean hands and a clear mind, to supper with you. When the *Swan's* hold is empty, it will be time enough to talk about amusement."

The evening after the unloading of the cargo was completed, Master Diggory said to his wife, "Get the table cleared as soon as you can, Mercy, and bring two flasks of that last batch of Spanish wine out of the cellar, and put them and some cups on the board. I have two or three friends coming in, to talk over a matter of business with Reuben and me."

As soon as the table was cleared Roger asked permission of his aunt to take his cousins for a walk upon the Hoe. This was readily granted, as there was no other room in which they could well be bestowed, and having set the wine upon the table, Dame Mercy retired to look after domestic matters, of which she always found an abundance to occupy her.

In a short time Master Turnbull, Master Streatham, and Master Winslow, three worshipful traders of Plymouth, arrived.

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"Cousin Reuben," Master Diggory said, "I have spoken to these good friends of mine in respect of that venture which you proposed to me, and they would fain hear more of it from your own lips. You can speak with confidence before them, for, whether they agree to cast in their lot with us or not, no word of this matter will pass their lips."

Reuben addressed himself to his task, and that at much greater detail than he had given when first speaking of the matter to Diggory.

He told them what he had gathered from the sea captains and others, as to the articles with which the Dons traded with the natives. That they were for the most part cheap and common, and that the amount required for a sufficient stock of such merchandise would be very small. Small hand-mirrors, strings of coloured glass beads, brass rings and trinkets, coloured handkerchiefs and bright cloths, were the articles chiefly used in barter. Knives and axes were greatly prized, the natives considering iron to be more valuable than silver or gold. Small bells and brass vessels were also valued, and iron spear and arrow heads were eagerly sought for; but the Spaniards were chary of providing such goods, seeing that they might be used in conflicts against themselves.

Then he produced a list of the stores that would be required for the ship and crew. "In this matter," he said, "you will think, perhaps, that my demands are excessive; but I am of opinion that money in this way would be well spent. As a rule—though I say it before men accustomed to victualling ships—our crews are vilely provided for. Salt meat they must eat, for no other can be obtained at sea, but it should be of good quality, likewise the other provisions. I want not biscuits that are alive with maggots, nor mouldy flour, nor peas or other things that cattle would turn up their noses at. I want everything to be the very best of its kind, with cider good and sound and in fair abundance.

"This is not an ordinary voyage. We shall be away for many months, maybe for a year or two; and unless the men are well fed they will assuredly lose their health, and likely

enough become mutinous. If we come upon a Spanish ship when three parts of the crew are weak with scurvy, we shall make but a poor fight of it. Therefore, I want to keep my men in good strength and in good heart, and to do this they must be well fed. Such a voyage as this no English ship has ever made before, and cooped up as we shall be in the *Swan*—for we must carry a great crew—everything depends upon there being no fair ground for grumbling. Many a ship has been lost from the crew being weakened by scurvy, and if you are to bring this enterprise to a good end, I say that there must be no stint in the matter of provisions, and that all must be the very best of their kind. I trust that once out there, we shall be able to obtain an abundance of fruit and vegetables from the natives, for these are things above all necessary to keep men's blood sweet on shipboard.

"Then as to arms. I think we should carry twelve pieces, six of a side, of which four should be of good size, and yet not too large to be quickly handled. In the matter of weight, the Spaniards are sure to have the advantage of us; but if we can shoot much more quickly than they can, it will equalize matters. Then, of course, there will be bows and arrows; I do not hold greatly to the new musketoons—a man can shoot six arrows while he can fire one of them, and that with a straighter and truer aim, though it is true they can carry somewhat farther. Then, of course, there will be pikes, and boarding axes, and a good stock of powder and balls for the cannon. These are the complete lists I have made out. Now I hold that we should carry from eighty to a hundred men. These I should pay only the ordinary rate of wage, but each should have an interest in the venture according to his rank. As to the profits I would leave it to you, my masters, to reckon; but seeing that in fair trade one can get gold, to say nothing of silver, weight for weight for iron, and other things in proportion, you can judge for yourselves what it will amount to—to say nothing of the chance of our falling in with a Spanish treasure ship, which may be rash enough, regarding us an easy prize, to fall foul of us."

"There is no doubt that the profits will be great if you return safely home, Master Hawkshaw," Nicholas Turnbull said; "but the chances of that seem but small."

"I think that the chances are good enough to risk my life upon, Master Turnbull," Reuben replied; "and no man can show greater confidence than that. This is the map of which my Cousin Diggory has no doubt spoken to you. You see that the islands are many, and some of them great, and that the places at which the Spaniards have ports are few in comparison. We have to avoid these, but anywhere else we can open trade with the natives. If we are chased, and find the place too hot for us, we can make away to the mainland, and cruising along there, may come upon places that the Spaniards have never visited, and may there gather great store of gold and silver without danger. But I wish no one, and certainly not my Cousin Diggory, to enter upon this affair unless with confidence and good heart. I would far rather take a horse and travel to Bristol, and lay my scheme before some of the traders there."

This idea was most distasteful to the traders, for Plymouth regarded Bristol with great jealousy, and Diggory Beggs at once said, "No, no, Reuben. My friend Master Nicholas Turnbull did not mean that he regarded your scheme as hopeless, only that the risks were doubtless great. But we all know that to earn great profit one must run such risk, and the venture, divided between four of us, would not be a very heavy one—that is to say, not beyond what we are justified in perilling. Would you leave us for a while, Reuben? We will examine these lists that you have made, and reckon up the total cost; and we shall then see the better how much we shall each have to contribute to make up our venture."

Reuben nodded, and putting on his hat, left the room saying, "In an hour I will return;" and then strolled over to a tavern much frequented by the masters of the ships in the port.

CHAPTER II.

BOUND TO UNKNOWN PARTS.

WHEN Reuben Hawkshaw returned to the chamber where Diggory Beggs was in conference with the other three traders he found that they had finished their calculations.

"The matter is settled, Reuben, as far as we are concerned. My three friends and myself will go equal shares in the matter. The value of the *Swan* is to be taken as part of my contribution, and if she ever comes back again, as we hope she may do, that sum will be deducted from my share of the profits, due allowance being made for what damage or injury she may have suffered. You, it is understood, will take a share of the profits equal to ours, and one-third share will, in the first place, be set aside to be divided among the other officers and crew. It will be left entirely to you to choose your officers and men; and I need not tell you the sort of fellows to pick out for such a business.

"I shall see that the *Swan* is provided with new rigging and gear, and that there is a plentiful store of all things on board, to repair any damage you may suffer from storm or foe. My good friends here are willing that the purchasing of all the stores required shall be in my hands, and you shall yourself test the quality of all the provisions before the bargains are concluded, so as to see that everything is sweet and wholesome. My friends here will not appear in the affair at all, for if folks saw that four of us were concerned in the venture they would think that it was something quite out of ordinary.

"All preparation will be made as quietly as possible, and it will be given out that the *Swan* is going to make a voyage to the Levant, and that she will carry a stronger battery of guns than usual to beat off any Moorish pirates she may meet by the way. As it is known that she had a sharp fight coming homeward it will seem only natural that we should add to her armament. I shall write up to my agent in

London to purchase for me the articles required to trade with the natives, and bid him send them round here by sea, well packed in bales. If we were to purchase so many strange articles here it would give rise to talk, for people would wonder with whom we intended to trade such goods. To-morrow morning you and I will make out a list of what you deem advisable for the purpose."

For another hour the party sat and talked; for now that the other traders had fully determined to go into the venture they were quite excited over it.

"Truly if I could but be spared from my business here I would gladly go with you myself," Master Streatham said. "I have always had a longing to see strange climes, and as no Englishman has yet set eyes on these countries you are about to visit, Friend Reuben, I would gladly be by your side, and take share in your perils and adventures."

"I doubt not your heart and courage, Master Jonas," Reuben replied, "and would warrant that you would behave doughtily in case of fight with Spaniard or Indian; but I question whether you would support the hardships of the voyage as cheerfully as you would the dangers. Although you may store the *Swan* with the best provisions that money can buy, a diet of naught but biscuit and salt meat palls after some weeks—to say nothing of some months—of it; and this all the more in a hot climate where the appetite weakens, and one comes to pine for dainty eates such as our Devonshire wives are famous for."

"Yes, I fear I never should support that," Master Streatham, who was a large corpulent man, mightily fond of the pleasures of the table, agreed with a sigh.

"Besides, Friend Jonas," Diggory Beggs put in; "Mistress Tabitha would have her voice in the matter; and however much your spirit would lead you to such an adventure, I doubt whether she would let you put foot on board."

"No, it is not for us to be running after adventure," Nicholas Turnbull said. "In the first place, we are sober citizens, and have our wives and families to think about, and our business

and the affairs of the town; and in the next place, even could we leave all these, Master Reuben Hawkshaw would not thank us for our company. Every foot of space is of value on the ship, and men who take up space and consume food and can neither set a sail nor work a cannon are but useless encumbrances."

"You have spoken truly, Master Nicholas," Reuben said bluntly. "In the matter of a trip to London, or even as far as the Low Countries, we could accommodate your worshipful honours well enough, but on a journey like this any man who cannot, if needs be, drink bilge-water and eat shoe-leather is best at home. I took a voyage once—it is many years ago now—to Amsterdam, and the owner, not my good cousin here, but another, took a fancy to go with me, and his wife must needs accompany him, and verily before that voyage was over I wished I was dead. I was no longer captain of the ship: my owner was my captain, and his wife was his. We were for ever putting into port for fresh bread and meat, milk and eggs, for she could eat none other.

"If the wind got up but ever so little we had to run into shelter and anchor until the sea was smooth. The manners of the sailors shocked her. She would scream at night when a rat ran across her, and would lose her appetite if a living creature, of which, as usual, the ship was full, fell from a beam on to her platter. I was tempted more than once to run the ship on to a rock and make an end of us all. No, no: a day's sail out from Plymouth, in a freshly launched ship, on a fine day, with a store of good victuals, and a few flasks of good wine, is a right merry business; but farther than that I wish not to see a passenger on board any ship which I command."

The others laughed.

"Well, Master Diggory, we must be going," Nicholas Turnbull said; "it is getting late. To-morrow I will come over in the forenoon, as you suggest, and we will go through these lists more carefully and talk over prices and see what bulk they will occupy, and discuss many other matters with the aid and advice of Master Hawkshaw. There is no occasion

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As the party went out Reuben found his son waiting outside the door.

"Well, father?" he asked anxiously, when the three merchants had walked briskly off towards their homes.

"It is all settled, Roger. As soon as everything is prepared the *Swan* will sail for the Spanish main."

Roger threw his cap high in the air with a lusty shout that startled the belated passers-by hurrying towards their homes, for it was now long after dark, and although the town watch patrolled the streets regularly prudent citizens did not care to be abroad after nightfall.

"You silly boy;" Reuben said; "you have lost your cap."

"Nay, I heard it fall somewhere here," Roger said, searching; "besides a cap is a small matter one way or other. Ah! here it is, floating in a pool of mud; however, a bucket of water will set it all right in the morning. O father! I feel wild with joy, only to think that all we have talked over together is going to be true, and that we are to be the first Englishmen who ever saw the beautiful islands they talk about, and the natives with their feathers and strange attire. And——"

"And the Spaniards with their loaded guns and their dungeons and gibbets," Reuben Hawkshaw put in.

"Not for us, father. The bottom of the sea maybe, but not a Spanish dungeon."

"I hope not, my lad; still no man can see the future. However, I am right glad that we are to try this adventure; it is a glorious one, and will bring us honour in the eyes of all Englishmen if we succeed, to say nothing of wealth. But mind that you let not your spirits run away with your tongue; no word of this must be spoken to a soul: nor must any mention be made of it in the hearing of my Cousin Mercy or the girls. The four partners in the adventure have all taken a solemn promise to each other that they will not breathe a word of it even to their wives, averring that women could never

be trusted to keep a secret, though as far as I have seen of them methinks a woman can keep a bridle on her tongue just as well as a man—and, indeed somewhat better, since they do not loosen them with cider or wine or strong waters. But I believe, myself, it was not so much that they doubted whether their wives would keep the secret as whether they would approve of the enterprise, and that they made the contract together in order that each might afterwards be able to assure his wife that, for his part, he would gladly have taken her into his confidence, but that he was obliged to fall in with the wishes of his partners. It is a strange thing, Roger, but methinks that, whereas most men behave valiantly enough when it comes to blows with an enemy, a great proportion are but cowards with their wives."

"But why should they be, father?"

"That is an easy question to ask, Roger, but a difficult one to answer. Maybe you will understand the matter better some day when you have taken a wife to yourself. In some matters there is no doubt that women's wits outrun those of men, and that they have a wonderful sharpness of tongue. Now a man, when things go wrong with him, speaks out loudly and roundly; he storms and he rages; but when it is over there is an end of it. Now a woman is not like that, she seems to ponder the matter over in her heart, and to bring it out as it were piecemeal, throwing little darts at you when you don't expect it, saying little things to which from their suddenness you can find no reply, and pricking you furiously all over until you are ready to roar out with pain and vexation. You see, Roger, a prick hurteth more than a great cut."

"I should not have thought that, father."

"That is because you have not thought the matter over, Roger. In that fight with the Moors many of the men were sorely cut and wounded, but you heard no cry from them: they only set their teeth the harder and smote more furiously upon their foes; but there was no one of them all but had he sat down suddenly on a small nail would have roared out like a bull, and have sworn lustily for a good half-hour.

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So it is in domestic matters: the man rages and storms when things go wrong; and his wife, if she be a woman of judgment, holds her peace until it is over, knowing well enough that he will be at her mercy afterwards. Then she sets to work, like those gnats that came on board at Genoa, that they call mosquitoes, and startles him with shrill buzzings in his ears, and pricketh him in the tenderest spots she can find, drawing but the smallest speck of blood, but causing an itching that makes him ready to tear his flesh.

"Your mother, Roger, was one of the best of women. She was a good housewife and an affectionate. I do not know that I ever saw her greatly ruffled in temper, but there were times when I would fly from my house and not come up from my work on board, until it was time to go straight away to bed, so did she prick and sting me with her tongue; and that not shrilly or with anger, but with little things let slip as it were unawares and with an air of ignorance that they in any way applied to me. No, Roger, if you will take my advice you will make your ship your mistress. She will have her ways, but you will learn them and will know just how much helm she requires, and how the sail should be trimmed; but with a woman no man attains to this knowledge, and if you take my advice you will give them a wide berth.

"I know," he went on, in answer to Roger's merry laugh, "that this is a matter in which no man will trust to other experience than his own. Every man who takes a woman to wife thinks that he can manage her, and goes into the matter with a light heart, as if it were a mere pleasure excursion on which he is embarking, whereas in truth it is a voyage as full of dangers and perils as that upon which we are about to adventure. Now let us turn back to our lodging, for I have nearly gone on my face four times already in these deep ruts and holes. I would that the councillors of this town could see the streets of Genoa, or Cadiz, or Amsterdam! They might then try to mend the ways of Plymouth, and make them somewhat less perilous to passengers after dark."

Work began in earnest upon the following day. A number

of shipwrights were set upon the hull of the *Swan*, which was to be thoroughly overhauled, caulked and pitched within and without; the masts and rigging were to be carefully looked to, and every defect repaired. A new suit of sails was ordered, the old ones to be patched where the Moorish shot had torn them, so as to be of use as a second suit did any misadventure happen to the others.

James Standing, the first mate, took charge of these matters; Reuben Hawkshaw assisting Diggory Beggs in all things relating to the stores. Greatly were the provision merchants of the town surprised at the quality of the provisions that Master Beggs ordered for the use of the *Swan*. Nothing but fine flour of the last year's grinding, freshly killed beef and pork to be carefully salted down in barrels, and newly baked biscuits, would satisfy Reuben Hawkshaw. They could scarce believe that such articles could be meant for use on shipboard, for, as a rule, the very cheapest and worst quality of everything was considered as amply good enough for the use of sailors.

Then, too, the cider and beer must be neither thin nor sour, but sweet and of good body. Surely, Master Beggs must have gone off his head thus to furnish his ship! for never before had a vessel sailed out of Plymouth harbour provided after this fashion. An ample store of ropes and cordage and of all matters required for a ship's equipage were also laid in. To all questions as to the surprising lavishness of cost, Diggory replied:

"I would have the ship well found in all matters. It was but the other day that the *Antelope* returned from a voyage to the Levant. She had lost a third of her crew from scurvy, and of the rest but six were strong enough to pull at a rope when she came into port. Did not the women follow Master Skimpole, her owner, through the streets and cry after him that he was the murderer of their husbands, by reason of the foul victual that he had provided for their use? No, no, it will cost more to start with, but it will be cheaper in the end, for a weak crew often means the losing of a ship

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besides the loss of a good name. I have never carried economy to such lengths as did Master Skimpole, but I am resolved in the future that those who sail in my ships shall have good and wholesome fare. Then, if misfortune happens, no one will be able to point to me in the streets and say that I fed my men worse than dogs, and thought only of my profits and nothing of the lives of those who served me."

Indeed, Master Diggory after a short time quite forgot that all this provision for the health and comfort of the crew was but the outcome of Reuben Hawkshaw's insistence, and came to regard himself with a feeling of pride as a man possessed of greater benevolence than his fellow-merchants. A week after the refitting of the *Swan* was completed, she was afloat with a large proportion of her stores in her hold. A ship from London came round and took up her berth alongside of her, discharging large numbers of bales and cases into her, together with six cannon in addition to those she bore before, and a large store of ammunition.

This naturally gave rise to fresh talk in the town. "They say that you are fitting the *Swan* out for a pirate, Master Beggs," one of the merchants said to him: "for twelve cannon are more than a peaceful trader can positively require."

"Yes, if she is to meet with none but peaceful people, neighbour; but if she meets with those who are not peaceful at all she needs just as much defence as if she were a ship of war. Master Hawkshaw had much ado to beat off the Moorish pirates who attacked him on his last voyage; and as the present one will be longer and more dangerous he has put stress upon me to add much to her armament. She will have valuable cargo on her return voyage, and he has strongly urged upon me to provide such means of defence as may ensure her being able to beat off any who meddle with her; besides, as far as I can read the course of politics it seems to me that our alliance with Spain is well-nigh at an end, and before the *Swan* is on her return we may be at war with her. This in itself is good reason why I should give my master the means of defending himself stoutly. The money spent on the

guns is not wasted. They will be none the worse for keeping, and should the *Swan* on her next voyage go into a safer line of trade I can sell them for as much as they now cost me."

In the meantime Reuben Hawkshaw had been carefully and quietly picking a crew. He was going to take with him fully twice as many as had before sufficed to navigate the *Swan*. Of the forty men who had sailed with him he had lost nine, and five others had not sufficiently recovered from their wounds to sail with him again. Of the remainder he engaged twenty, all of whom were stout and willing fellows who would, he knew, sail with him wherever he bid them; the remaining six being given to grumbling he would have none of, good sailors though they were. "Half-a-dozen grumblers are enough to spoil a whole crew," he said. There were, therefore, some sixty new hands to engage. Towards these he found eighteen who had sailed with him on previous voyages, and were glad enough to rejoin him, for he had the name of being a good captain, considerate to his men, one who would be obeyed, but who did not harass his crew, and did all he could in reason to make them comfortable.

The others were picked up carefully one by one. For this purpose he took some of his best men aside, and confided to them privately that the present voyage was to be out of the ordinary, and that he needed not only stout fellows but willing and cheerful ones: men who would take hardships without grumbling, and who with a prospect of good reward in addition to their pay would go without question where they were told, and do as they were ordered—were it to singe the beard of the Grand Turk himself in his own palace. He charged them, therefore, to find for him men of this kind among their relations or men who had sailed with him.

"I would rather," he said, "have landsmen, providing they are strong, and stout-hearted, than sailors however skilful who are given to grumbling and disaffection. We shall have plenty of good sailors on board and the others will soon learn their business; therefore, choose you not for seamanship, but rather for willingness and good temper. And broach not the subject to any unless you feel assured beforehand that they

will be willing to join, for I want not the matter talked about. Therefore those who join are to keep the matter private, and are not to come on board until the night before we get up our anchors. We are taking a much stronger crew than usual, for we have many guns that need working if it comes to fighting."

As these instructions were given separately, none of the twelve men he spoke to knew that the others had received similar instructions, and that instead of forty men as usual, the *Swan* was to carry nearly ninety. As to the officers, Reuben Hawkshaw needed none others than those who had before sailed with him. The two mates had each been with him for upwards of ten years, and had learned their business under his eye; and he intended, although he had not as yet told him so, to rate Roger as third mate. His boatswain would go in the same capacity as before; and he shipped, as gunner, one who had served for some years in a king's ship in that rank, and was well acquainted with the working of ordnance.

Mistress Mercy had, of course, heard from her gossips of the talk that was going on concerning the unusual preparations that were being made by her husband for the forthcoming voyage of the *Swan*; and the trader was often put to his wits' end by her questions on the subject. His professions of benevolence towards the crew, and his explanations of his reasons for her powerful armament had sufficed for others, but they by no means satisfied her.

"Do you think, Diggory Beggs," she asked, indignantly, "that after all these years I do not know you as well as I do the contents of my linen-chest? I have never before known you open your purse strings one inch wider than was necessary. Have I not always had to ask until I am verily ashamed, before I can get a new gown for myself, or a decent cloak for the girls? You have ever been hardfisted with your money, and never disposed to spend a great save on good occasion. There is not the wife of a trader of your standing in Plymouth but makes a braver show than I do, when we walk on the Hoe on holidays or feast-days. There is something at the

bottom of all this I don't understand; but mark you, Diggory, I am not to be kept in the dark. As your wife, I have a right to know why you are throwing about good and lawful money. I toil and slave to keep your house decent and respectable at small cost, but I shall do so no longer. If you can afford to throw money into the gutter in one way, you can in another; and people will cry shame on you, when, as they say, you are pampering up your sailors in such manner as will cause discontent among all others in the port, while your wife and daughters are walking about in homespun!"

Mistress Mercy did not succeed in extracting the information she desired from her husband, who was, however, forced to fall back upon the defence that he had his reasons, but that he was pledged to say nothing concerning them.

"Pledged!" she replied, scornfully. "And to whom are you pledged, I should like to know? I thought you were pledged to me, and that you were bound to cherish and comfort me; which means, of course, that you were to have no secrets from me, and to tell me all that I desire to know."

But though Diggory kept the secret, albeit with much trouble and with many misgivings as to what would happen in the future, when his wife came to learn of the important venture he had undertaken without consulting her, she nevertheless succeeded so far that, in order to pacify her, he was obliged to allow her a free hand in choosing from his magazines such pieces of cloth and silk for herself and the girls as she had a fancy to. This permission she did not abuse as to quality, for she knew well enough what was becoming in the way of dress for the wife of a merchant, and that it was not seemly for such a one to attire herself in apparel suited for the wives of nobles and ladies of the Court. But Diggory groaned in spirit, although he prudently said nothing, at seeing that she took advantage of the present position to carry off a store which would amply suffice for at least two or three years' wearing for herself and the girls.

"You have done me a parlous ill turn, Cousin Reuben," he said sadly to his cousin, "by bidding me hide this matter

from my wife. A few more such secrets, and I should be a ruined man. Never before have I known her seized with a desire for such prodigality of vesture. I have looked upon her all these years as a sober and discreet woman, well content to wear what was quiet and becoming to her station; but now—truly my heart melted when I saw how she fingered the goods, and desired John, my assistant, to cut off such lengths as she desired from some of my goodliest cloths."

"Tut, tut, cousin; you exaggerate things greatly. It is no wonder that Mistress Mercy, seeing that you are flourishing greatly in trade, and able to spend your money freely, should deem it but fitting that she, as your wife, should make a braver show than heretofore. Besides, the girls are growing up, and need to be a little bright and gay. Why, man, there are many London citizens, who could not count their broad pieces with you, whose wives spend many times as much every year on their attire as Mistress Mercy has cost you now."

"Well, well, Reuben, there may be something in what you say, but no more secrets, or there is no saying what wild extravagance she might take in her head next time. She might quarrel with the house and insist upon a new one furnished from top to bottom, or set her heart on a coach with running footmen. No, no more secrets, or I shall be having her so set herself up that I shall be no more master of my own house."

Roger was plied with many questions by his cousins, who tried alternately coaxing and pouting, to learn from him why it was that, as all told them, preparations were being made for the voyage of the *Swan* such as were unknown before at Plymouth. All he could reply was, that the ship was only being victualled as all ships ought to be whose owners cared as they should do for the comfort and health of their crews. More than that he could not say. He would not deny that he had certain ideas of his own as to the voyage; but if Cousin Diggory and his father thought it well to make no talk about the matter, it was not for him to say what were his thoughts about it.

"But we would tell nobody," Dorothy urged. "Don't you think we could keep a secret as well as you can?"

"That is just it, Cousin Dorothy! don't you see if I were to tell you, it would be a proof that I could not keep a secret? and then, if you told it I could not blame you for blabbing. I don't say there is any secret; but if there is, I must keep it."

"I know that you are going into danger, Reuben; also you would not have all those great guns they say there are on board."

"The great guns will keep us out of danger, you see. The more guns the less danger."

"Come away, Agnes," Dorothy said with an assumption of stateliness. "Cousin Roger is altogether too smart for us. Let him keep his secrets if he will, and let us go and help mother with her sewing."

And so for the last two or three days before the *Swan* sailed there was a coolness between Roger and the girls, as well as between Diggory Beggs and his wife.

At last the day came when everything was complete, the water casks filled, and the last pack^{ets} and bale stored away in the hold; and even Reuben Hawkshaw admitted that there was nothing else that he could think of requisite either for the safety or navigation of the ship, or the provisioning or health of the crew. The order was passed round for all the old hands to be aboard before sunset that evening, together with those who had been openly engaged to fill up the vacancies.

As for the rest the twelve recruiters each received private orders. Three of them were to bring down the men they had engaged to the wharf, abreast of the *Swan*, at eight o'clock, and to go off in the boat which would be awaiting them there under charge of Master Standing; three others were to come half an hour later; the other six were to bring down their men at daybreak,—so that all would get on board unnoticed.

The last meal at Master Diggory's was but a dull one. The subject of the *Swan* and her voyage had by common consent been dropped altogether for the last day or two, and it was not until supper was over that Mistress Mercy and the girls

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knew that the hour of sailing was at hand; then Reuben spoke up:

"We go on board to-night, Cousin Mercy, and shall get up our anchor and loose our sails the first thing in the morning. I know that you have been somewhat aggrieved at not learning more about our intentions; but it was not Cousin Diggory's fault that you have not been told."

"I do not seek to pry into matters which my husband thinks fit to conceal from me," she said, coldly.

"Nevertheless, cousin, you are hurt; and I cannot blame you, seeing that it is natural that a woman should like to know what is passing around her. But I wish before I go that you should see that Diggory is not to blame in this matter. There is no harm in my telling you now that he stands not alone in this venture, but that others have joined with him. Now he himself, knowing you to be a circumspect woman, who could be trusted to keep to yourself anything that you might learn, would willingly have taken you into our councils; but all women are not so discreet, and matters which it is very important should be kept secret might have leaked out had it not been proposed that all concerned in the matter should bind themselves solemnly to each other to say no words about it, even to their wives; and thus, you see, Diggory's lips have been sealed, and that not by any mistrust of you. It may be some time before it will be prudent for the truth about this voyage to be known, but in good time those concerned may think fit to relieve each other of this agreement they have entered upon, and to let their wives and others who may be depended upon, into the secret. I wanted to tell you this before we sailed, for I should not like to go away feeling that you cherished aught of malice against me; for I have seen for some time that you have held me, as well as your husband, to blame. We are going on a long voyage, Cousin Mercy, and one from which it may well be that none of us will ever return to this good town of Plymouth. I am somewhat breaking my promise in saying this, and I rely upon you and the girls repeating it to no one. It is a

long and venturous journey, and one not without much peril; but if it succeeds it will bring much honour as well as wealth to all concerned. And now, Cousin Mercy, as I have told you so much as that, I trust that we may part as we have always parted, in friendly and kindly fashion. You and your husband have been good friends to me and my boy, and have gone in that matter far beyond the ordinary bounds of kinship; and I should not like to start upon this voyage knowing that there was a cloud between us."

Mistress Mercy rose from her seat, walked round to Reuben Hawkshaw, and kissed him. "Forgive me, Cousin Reuben," she said, "for my cross looks and shrewish ways. I see that I have acted altogether wrongly in the matter, and that neither you nor Diggory are to blame. I knew not that others were concerned, and thought that a mystery was being made because it was considered that, did I know it, I should run out and blab it in the streets of Plymouth. Now I know how it is I am well content as to that, but not so at the thought of this unknown peril into which you are about to run, and I wonder that Diggory should adventure your life and that of Roger upon such an expedition."

"It is my own proposal, Cousin Mercy, and Diggory has but yielded to my wishes. Roger is as hot for the adventure as I am, and we are both content to run what risks we may encounter for the honour which we shall gain if we return safely home. And now, Roger, let us be going, leave-takings are sad things, and the shorter they are made the better."

While these words had been said, the girls, who sat on either side of Roger, were silently making their peace with him by furtive squeezes of his hands below the table, and they burst into tears as Roger and his father rose.

"Good-bye, Agnes," Roger said. "Good-bye, Dorothy," and as he kissed her he whispered, "if I return I will bring you the prettiest trinkets ever seen in Plymouth."

"Bring back yourself, Roger, and I shall be more than content," she replied.

In another minute they were gone, Diggory Beggs taking

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his hat and starting with them, telling his wife that he should not return until morning, as he should go on board the *Swan* with them and remain until she sailed.

"You will not go before daybreak, Cousin Reuben?" Mistress Mercy asked.

"No; it will more likely be an hour after sunrise before we weigh anchor."

"Then I and the girls will be down on the wharf to see the last of you and wave our kerchiefs, and wish you a pleasant voyage and a safe return."

CHAPTER III.

THE VOYAGE.

GR^{EAT} was the surprise of the original crew of the *Swan*, when boat-load after boat-load of fresh hands arrived. They themselves had been quietly told that the voyage was likely to be one of unusual length, and that none save those willing and ready to stay away as long as might be required were to sail in the *Swan* on her present venture. There was, therefore, a general idea current among them that Master Hawkshaw had some adventure quite out of the ordinary in his mind; and the news that some heavy guns had arrived from London for her had confirmed their opinion as to the voyage.

"Let us have no loud talk to-night," Reuben Hawkshaw ordered; "when we get our sails spread to-morrow and are well out of port, you can talk to your hearts' content, but the night is still, and I want not that attention of any on shore should be called to the ship: there has been more foolish talk than enough about her already; so turn in to rest, lads, without ado. The boatswain will serve you each out a pottle of cider, such as you never drank on board ship before, I warrant me, and which is a sample of what you will have all the voyage. When you have tossed that off, let each lie down as he can and

space. We will divide into watches and settle as to each man's place to-morrow. Pengarvan, set four hands aside to go on shore with the boat an hour before daybreak; tell them off to sleep where you can lay hands upon them easily. Keep the boat alongside, and make off to the wharf as noiselessly as you can; but I shall be on deck then, and will give you further orders."

The second mate only replied, "Ay, ay, Captain Hawkshaw," for he was a man of but few words. Reuben Hawkshaw was not fond of Cornishmen, but he made an exception in the case of Pengarvan—indeed, although their borders joined, there was little liking among Cornish and Devon men for each other.

"They are black, ill-conditioned dogs," Reuben Hawkshaw would say; "good sailors I own, none better, but glum and surly in their ways, and with nothing joyous in their natures. It seems to me that working in the darkness—in those holes of theirs underground—has infected the spirits of the whole county, as it might well do, seeing that, as everyone knows, there are little people who guard the treasures of the mines, and who, if they cannot do bodily hurt to those who delve for metals, can yet infect their spirits with a black melancholy and do them other grievous harm. So when Pengarvan came to me as a boy on the quay here, and asked me to take him with me to sea, I did not much like doing so, for I saw at once by his speech that he was Cornish; but I did not like to turn him away, for he said that he was willing, and accustomed to the sea. So I gave him a trial, and he has turned out a first-rate sailor; he is chary of speech, and not given to jest or laughter; but he is always quick and willing to obey orders, taking whatever comes in good part, and bearing himself just the same in storm as in sunshine.

"I know nought of his history. The *Swan* has been his home since he first came on board twelve years ago. As long as she is afloat he never leaves her; when she is laid down for repairs he takes the nearest lodging on hand and abides there till she is afloat again. I believe that he comes from Fowey, and

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guess that he got into some trouble or other, and had to run for it. But that's nothing to me. I want no better man, and know that whatever comes I can rely upon Pengarvan to stand by me and the ship to the last."

If the men were astonished at the thirty new hands who came on board on the previous evening, they were still more astonished when as many more embarked in the morning. The new-comers were ordered to keep in the fore-castle and in the quarters under it until the *Swan* was well away from land.

"There will be a good many eyes turned on the ship as soon as we are seen to be shaking out our canvas," Reuben said; "and there is no need to set their tongues wagging by showing more men on deck than we usually carry."

The captain and Diggory Beggs talked late on into the night. They went over all the ground again; and Reuben brought out the map of the islands and showed where he intended to touch.

"I think not to do much trading there," he said. "There is gold in Hispaniola and Cuba; but the captain I got the chart from said there was no very great store there, and that the natives had but little of it when the Spaniards first arrived, seeing that it took trouble and labour to obtain, and they are by nature altogether averse to hard work, and moreover place but little value on the gold; but there were rumours among them that farther west there was a land where gold was in great plenty, and where there was a powerful people dressed in gay attire and wearing great bracelets and necklaces of gold.

"So far, the Spaniards have not found this land, though they have sailed down the coast a long way to the south, and northward as far as the point that Master Cabot reached when he sailed down from Newfoundland; but due west they have never sailed far, and have found the sea ever stretching away in front of them; so that it is clear that either the great mainland is split in two at this point, or there is a vast bay. This I shall try to discover, and if we find these people of whom the Indians speak, we may well return loaded down with gold.

“ My advice to you, Cousin Diggory, is, that you and your partners should continue to keep silent as to this voyage of ours. If we come not back, and after a time there is a talk here that we have gone to the Indies, the news may be carried to London, and you may be questioned and may be blamed mightily for undertaking such an adventure without the king's permission; and all sorts of harm may fall upon you. Success would, in my mind, altogether excuse you, and you will be able to offer so great a present to the king that he will be mightily contented; but if you fail it will be otherwise. Therefore, my advice is, till the *Swan* is anchored in the port say nothing about her. It were best from the moment we sail to write off all that has been spent upon her as money lost, just the same as if you knew for certain that she had gone down as soon as she was out of sight of land.

“ Folks will ask you what has become of her, and you will truly say that you have had no news; and when months pass on, and she comes not, you will shake your head and say that you begin to fear that evil has befallen her. She may have gone down in a storm, or been cast on some rocky coast and all perished, or been captured by pirates. If the friends of the sailors make a stir and go to the magistrates, you have but to show the copy of the letter of instructions which we drew up the other day, laying it down that I was to make for the African Straits, and to put into no Portuguese or Spanish port by the way; that I was then to shape my course for the island of Malta, and to take in fresh stores of food and water there; then that I was to pass round the southernmost point of Greece, and sail upwards to Constantinople, and there to dispose of such portion of my cargo as I could sell at good profit, buying goods suited for our market with the monies I received; and if my hold was full I was then to return straight to England, but if I had still some of my cargo unsold, I could trade as best seemed to me among the Eastern Islands, and with the ports of Asia.

“ There would be your instructions to show, and as it is notorious to all that you provisioned the ship in the best manner

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possible, and laid in greater stores than ordinary of all things necessary for the voyage, none can hold you to blame in any way if the chances of the seas have proved too masterful for us, and the *Swan* returns no more. Should we carry out our enterprise to the fullest, and gain great store of gold, I shall, if it is possible, come not directly home, but to some port—maybe in Ireland, maybe in the Low Countries—whence we can send word to you.

“Upon hearing of our coming there, I should advise you and your fellow-adventurers to journey straight to London, to gain audience with one of the ministers, and tell him you have a matter of great importance to communicate to the king himself; and that you should then lay before his majesty an account of what you have done, and pray him to pardon your boldness, which was due to your desire for the honour of the country as much as to wish for profit, and beg him to accept such share of the gold as you may think fit. I shall, of course, when I write let you know about what weight of the metal I have on board. In that way when the ship comes into port all will be smooth sailing for you, whereas if I come unannounced there is no saying what share of your profits his majesty may think fit to take.”

“I think the plan is a very good one, indeed, Reuben; and I will follow it to the letter. When think you may I begin to expect to hear news of you?”

“It is difficult to say, seeing that we know neither the distance we may have to sail nor the difficulties we may have to meet with, nor the winds and currents of those regions. I should say fifteen months at the earliest; and if double that time passes without your hearing aught, then I should say you may give up all hope of ever seeing us again.”

“I am disposed even now, Reuben, to regret that I ever embarked in this venture—not, as you surely know, from any fear of losing the money that I have put into it, but from the risk that will be run by you and the lad Roger, who are both very dear to me.”

“Whatever comes you must not blame yourself in that

matter, Diggory. You have only yielded to my solicitations, and if we go to our death it is our choosing and none of thine."

"Should the *Swan* come back without you, Reuben—as may possibly be, for if there be any danger you are sure to expose yourself in the front of it—Roger shall be as a son to me, and shall either in time have a ship to command, and a share in her, as thou hast; and he shall come in our business when he has had enough of adventure at sea and is willing to settle down on land."

Reuben wrung his cousin's hand silently, and then said, "Let us take one more glass of strong water, Diggory, and then get a few hours' sleep before morning. It is past midnight now, and I must be up by four, for at that hour the boat must go off for the first batch of our new hands."

Day broke just as the last batch of men were brought on board. As soon as these had gone below the whistle was sounded, the old crew came up on deck, and the preparations for making sail commenced. The anchor was hove short, the lashings of the sails were loosened, the flags run up to the mast-heads, the last casks and bales lowered into the hold, the hatches put on, and the decks washed down. Before these preparations were all complete a little group was seen standing at the end of the wharf.

"There is your good-wife, Diggory, and the girls. She has kept her word to be up betimes to see the last of us."

At last all was ready, and Diggory shook hands with Reuben and turned to Roger, when the captain said, "The lad can go in charge of the boat that takes you ashore, Diggory, and just say another word of parting to them there."

In five minutes Roger stood on the wharf. "I cannot wait, Cousin Mercy," he said, "for all is ready for hoisting the anchor; but my father said I might just come ashore for one more good-bye."

"May God protect you, Roger," Mistress Mercy said, as she folded him in a motherly embrace. "We shall all pray for you daily and nightly, until you return. Good-bye,

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Roger! Don't imperil your life needlessly, but be prudent and careful."

"For your sake, Dorothy," he whispered as he kissed her.

"Yes, for my sake, Roger," she said softly. Agnes hung round his neck crying loudly, and her mother had to unclasp the child's fingers.

"God bless you all," Roger said hoarsely, and then ran down the steps and leapt into the stern of the boat.

When he gained the deck of the *Swan* the boat was hoisted in, and the men began to heave round the windlass. As soon as the anchor was up the sails were sheeted home; and the *Swan*, yielding to the light breeze off the land, began to make her way through the water. Roger from the poop waved his cap in reply to the signals of farewell from shore, and then running down into the waist busied himself with the work of the ship until they were too far away from the land for the figures there to be any longer visible.

The rest of the crew now came on deck, and all were mustered in watches. Reuben Hawkshaw, standing on the edge of the poop then said a few words to them.

"Men," he said, "I dare say there is some wonderment among you in finding yourselves so strong a crew, and at seeing the *Swan* so well provided with guns and with all other necessaries. You will learn in good time all about it, but at present it is best for many reasons that you should know nothing about the matter. We may be overhauled by a king's ship; we may meet with foul weather and have to put back into port; and a loose tongue might do us grievous damage. It is enough for you to know that where the ship is going you are going; that she is stored with provisions of such quality as was never put on board a trader before; that everything will be done for your comfort. As to myself I am content to know that I have a crew of eighty-five stout Devonshire lads under me, and that we can give an account of ourselves who-soever may meet us. Those who have sailed with me before know that I do my best for my men, that there will be no harsh words or violence on board this ship save they are well

merited. Discipline, order, and obedience I will have, and that strictly. Above all I will have no grumbling; a grumbling crew is a useless crew, and a sick crew; while a cheerful crew can meet with confidence whatever befalls them; but I think not that I have any grumblers on board, since every man has been carefully chosen. A merry heart goes all the way, as the saying has it, and I want this crew to be a happy one.

"So far as the order of the ship permits it, you shall have every indulgence. At first you will find yourselves pressed for space, but you will soon eat and drink room for yourselves. The stores to be first used are all down in the forehold, and I reckon that in three weeks or a month that will be cleared; and there will then be room for all to lie in shelter when we are in harbour; and the present accommodation is sufficient for the watch below, providing all sleep quietly, and have good conscience. And now to work. While you get everything tidy and in good shipshape the cooks will get to work at the coppers; and I can promise you a good breakfast, washed down by sound cider such as you had last night."

The men gave a cheer, and were soon at work under the direction of their officers. It mattered little to them where they were going or what was before them. They had guessed that it was no ordinary voyage they were going to undertake; but the thought that wherever it was they were to be well kept and well cared for, satisfied them mightily, and if fighting were to come into their way so much the better. With such a crew they could well take their part against any enemy they were likely to meet.

In the poop of the *Swan* there was a small saloon extending across the stern, and two cabins on either side of the passage leading to it. These were occupied by the captain, the two mates, and Roger; and they took their meals together in the saloon. In a cabin underneath this, the three petty officers and twenty of the sailors lived together, the main body of the crew occupying the raised fore-castle and the cabin underneath it. The galley was forward, built up against the fore-castle, and thus sheltered from heavy seas which might sweep the waist of the

vessel. Four small cannon were mounted on the poop, two on the forecastle, the six larger guns were in the waist—three on either side.

The breeze freshened as the *Swan* drew out from under the shelter of the land, and by midday the shore had faded from the sight. The crew had by this time settled down in their places, and sat in groups on deck, some overhauling the contents of their sea-bags, looking over their clothes, and setting to, with needle and thread, to make such repairs as were needed. Some of the new hands were leaning over the side wishing heartily that they were on shore again. Those who had made voyages were talking to their companions about the various ports at which they might touch, and the sights they would behold. All save those suffering from the effects of the sea were in high good temper. As much fresh beef as was like to keep good till eaten, had been brought on board. The wind set in the next morning freshly from the north-east, and with all sail set the *Swan* ran gaily before it.

"Would that this wind would blow without a break for another month," Reuben Hawkshaw said, as he sat at dinner with the two mates and Roger. Standing and Pengarvan looked up quickly, but the latter without a question again betook himself to feeding. Standing, however, laid down his jack-knife in astonishment.

"A month, Captain Hawkshaw! I should have thought four or five days of this would give us ample westing, and that after that a westerly breeze, somewhat from the north, would suit us best."

"Ay, ay, you would think so, Standing; but then you see you know not to within a good many points where our journey tendeth. Wait till I have finished my dinner, for man cannot talk and eat together with comfort. Then, when my boy has removed the trenchers, I will tell you over an extra mug of cider what all this is about."

The meal lasted for some time longer, for Reuben Hawkshaw was a good trencherman, and one not given to hurrying himself, unless there was need; and neither of the other men were far

behind their chief in the matter of the stowage of victuals. But at last the meal was done, and the trenchers were carried off; the earthenware mugs were again filled with cider, and then Reuben Hawkshaw—sitting at one end of the table, with Poger facing him, and the mates one on either hand, threw himself back in his settle, which he used in right of captaincy, while the others contented themselves with stools, and began:—

“I had not thought, comrades, to broach this matter until we were down in the latitude of the African Straits; but seeing that the wind has taken us in charge, I see no reason for longer keeping silent. You who have both sailed with me for years must have known right well that this was no ordinary voyage—the number of men I have taken on board, the care I have had as to the stores, and the great number of water-casks, must have told you that. You have asked no questions, and I did not expect that you would.”

“Why should we?” James Standing growled. “It mattered nought to us where we went, as we knew we should hear in good time.” Pengarvan said nothing, but he nodded to show that he agreed with the first mate.

“Well, men, our intent is this: I see not why the Spaniards should have all the good things to themselves, and I purpose to go a-trading with the natives, down in these new islands of theirs.”

An exclamation of surprise broke from James Standing, but Pengarvan only nodded again.

“But this is not all,” Reuben went on. “So far the Spaniards have not gained much store of gold from these islands; but I have learned that among the natives there is talk of a rich nation lying somewhere farther to the west, where gold and riches of all sorts abound. So far the Spaniards have not found it, having their hands pretty well full. They have sailed down the land to the south, and as you know Master Cabot sailed from the north, down almost to the latitude of these islands; but due west no man has sailed yet, or, if he has, has never returned to tell of it.”

"Well, Captain Reuben," James Standing said, "as I said before, it makes no difference to me where we go. If the Spaniards catch us there, they will cut our throats to a surety if they can; but if you are ready to take your chance of that I have nothing against it. I feel as if I am taken aback a bit just now, as it comes new to me—my own fancy being that you intended to trade with the Turkish ports and islands, and had taken a strong crew on board to beat off any pirates that they might meet."

"And you, Pengarvan?"

"It is as I expected, Captain. I thought that you did not bring the Spaniard on board at Cadiz, and sit plying him with wine and talking to him by the hour for nothing. So when I saw what was being done on board the *Swan*, it came to me that you intended to try a venture in the Spanish main."

"Here is a map which I got from the Spaniard," Reuben said, laying it out upon the table. "Here, you see, all the great islands are marked in their places, with their ports and the Spanish settlements. There are besides these, the Spaniards said, numbers of small ones not marked on the chart. In these large islands, Cuba and Hispaniola, the Spaniards have made themselves masters of the people and reduced them to slavery, and there would be no touching at these with either safety or profit. The small ones have been only occasionally visited, and with these we may do trade. Here is the line of the mainland to the south of the islands. You see it runs along as far as the easternmost of them, and then turns away to the south, while from the north the mainland comes down well-nigh to Cuba. One reason, the Spaniard said, why they have not sailed west to find out this land of gold, is, that there is a great current which runs in between the islands and the southern land, and sweeps out again with great force between the Bahamas and this northern land; and that they fear being swept away by it and getting driven into whirlpools, and moreover they say that there are great storms to be encountered in the waters to the west.

"Now the fact that there is a current into, and another

current out of, this western sea seems to show that there is no exit to the west, and that the water that comes in at the south finds itself in a great bay, and so is forced to pass out to the north. How great this bay may be I know not, but surely it cannot be too great to search. At any rate it is clear to me that somewhere to the west these two great lands that we see to the north and south join. Now, that men who have, with much toil and risk, made a discovery of a new land should claim it for their king seems to me fair and right, but not that they should claim sole traffic with lands of whose very existence they know nothing, and, therefore, although it is true that the pope has given these western islands to Spain, I see not how he can give to them land not as yet discovered.

"If there is, as the natives in the islands say, a land lying somewhere to the west where gold is abundant, I see no reason why, if we are first there, we should not gather great stores. The bales and boxes that were brought round from London contain a great quantity of all the things that are, as the Spaniard told me, most prized by the natives. Glass beads of all sorts and kinds, vessels of brass, iron hatchets and arrow heads, hawk-bells, mirrors, and trinkets. The venture is, I admit, a perilous one; but if we succeed every man on board will have a share in the profit." Reuben then explained the arrangements he had made with the owners for the division of such treasure as they might bring home.

"That is a fair proposal," the first mate said; "and I doubt not that all on board will gladly fall in with it. If we succeed we shall set every tongue in England wagging; and there will be plenty of others, I warrant, who will be ready to follow our example.

"I had intended," Reuben went on, "to sail as far as the straits, then to head for the island of Madeira, and when within sight of it to head away west-sou'-west; but if we carry this wind with us we will make straight for the islands, and thereby shall escape the risk of being seen by vessels coming and going, as they all follow a track south of Madeira. We can make a good fight with any Spaniard that falls foul

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of us, and are as likely to take him as he is to capture us; but I would fain keep clear of them if I can, since we go to trade and not to fight. Now I think you had best give a hint of the matter in hand to our old crew, all of whom we can depend upon, as indeed I hope we can upon all, though as yet their mettle has not been tried. Take them aside singly, and open the matter to them; in a few days I shall tell the rest, but the matter will go more fairly and easily if we have a proportion of them ready to throw up their caps and shout."

"Aye, aye, Captain Reuben. One bell-wether will carry a whole flock after it, but I fear not that any will want to hold back: it is just the adventure that will suit a brave man's spirit—plenty to see, plenty to do, the chance of a fight, and the chance of a fortune. I should like to know what one could want better than that; besides, all are in high feather at the quality of the food, which they say the like of was never known on shipboard before, and that goes a long way. It is the fasting man who kicks; the full one is content, however matters go."

Pengarvan had not again opened his lips; he nodded occasionally, and that was all his captain expected of him; but the fact that he had guessed the destination of the ship added to the esteem which Reuben Hawkshaw had for his second mate.

Three days later Reuben Hawkshaw called the crew together, and informed them of their destination; he possessed the rough eloquence best suited for the class he was addressing, and carried his hearers with him. He spoke as if the idea that any of them could shrink from undertaking such an adventure had not entered his mind, but assumed that they were the most fortunate of men in having such a chance offered to them.

"You do not yet know," he said, "how great a piece of good fortune has befallen you by being chosen to sail with me on this voyage. Had the news been as much as whispered in Plymouth I could have gathered a thousand volunteers in an hour. You all know how careful have been the preparations for the voyage, how strongly we are manned, how well we are armed, what stores of excellent provisions and what casks

of good cider and ale are in the hold. Now I am going to tell you what all this is for. We are going, lads, to get gold, and if we succeed, as I doubt not we shall, each man on his return will, in addition to his wages, have a share in the spoil,—such a share as will, I hope, make him comfortable for life.”

A loud cheer broke from the men as they pressed forward eagerly to listen.

“I have learned, lads,” he said, “from a Spaniard who has been out there, of a land abounding with gold lying to the west of the Spanish Islands. As yet none of them have ventured thither, and I mean that we shall be the first to reap the harvest. Why should these Spaniards keep every good thing to themselves? We are as good sailors as they are and better, as good men and better: therefore, I say, we will have a share of the prizes. We shall touch on our way at some of the islands for wood and water and fruit and vegetables. There are plenty of them where we can find these without meeting with a Spaniard; if we do meet with one, and he tries to interfere with us, so much the worse for him. Then, when we have taken in what we want, we will sail west, and if we find this land, as I doubt not we shall, we will return home with such treasures as were never brought before into an English port.

“You must make up your minds, lads, that it is not to be all plain sailing, and that we may have hardships and trials to meet with, but no true sailor shrinks from these. It is a grand adventure, lads—an adventure that nobles and princes would be glad to share in; there is honour and glory in it as well as booty. We shall be the first Englishmen who ever sailed those seas or dared to dispute the right of the Spaniards to keep all the treasures of the west in their hands; and in time to come your children's children will be proud to say, ‘My grandsire was one of those who sailed in the *Swan*.’”

When the captain ceased speaking there was a shout of enthusiasm from his hearers, not one of whom but considered himself to be one of the most fortunate of men in being chosen as one of the crew of the *Swan*. This was an adventure,

indeed. It was no mere trading voyage, but a grand expedition. There were new lands to be seen, there was the satisfaction of outwitting the Spaniards, there were glory and honour and gold to be obtained. As for hardships and danger they recked little of them. These always formed part of their lot; and with so well found a ship and so good a crew they felt confident of being able to face anything that might befall them.

They speedily broke up into excited groups eagerly discussing the news they had heard. The new hands pried the older ones with questions as to the general strength of the Spanish ships, the number of men they carried, and their armament. The guns were examined with fresh attention and admiration, and men looked along the sights as if already in fancy engaging in an encounter with the Dons. A horn of strong ale was served out to each by the captain's orders to celebrate the occasion, and the men drank success to the enterprise, shaking each other by the hand, and each vowing to do his share bravely.

The wind continued favourable until they had passed Madeira, which was seen like a cloud on the port side. Three days later the breeze dropped, and there was a stark calm, in which the *Swan* lay motionless on the sea for well-nigh a fortnight. The captain, knowing well that idleness is of all things the most harmful to a crew, set them to work to get up the cases of arms and polish their swords and pikes until they shone. Then the crew were exercised with boarding-pike and cutlass. Single-sticks and staffs, which the captain had provided for such an occasion, were brought up, and men were matched against each other with these—small prizes being given to those who showed themselves the most proficient. Squads were told off to the great guns and instructed how these should best be worked by the gunner, so that each man should do his share without hurry or confusion. He would fain have practised them at a mark, but this the captain would not have, as with the air so still the guns would be heard at a long distance, and might even bring up some Spanish or

Portuguese vessel to enquire into the cause of the firing—for they were now far below the line which the ships of other nations were forbidden to cross.

Nor was there great need for practice, for to each gun was appointed as captain one of the old hands accustomed to the work, who could be trusted to send the ball straight when the time should come. With these and other exercises, and with such sports as the sailors could devise, the time of the calm was got through well enough. They had now been over a month at sea; but, thanks to the honest food and sound cider, the men's health in no way suffered, and all were as well and hearty as upon the day when they set sail.

When the wind came it came with sudden fury, but Reuben Hawkshaw had heard of the sudden gales that ships sailing west had to encounter, and took precautions as soon as it began to rise—furling up all the great sails, passing lifelines along the sides, to which the men could cling if the waves washed boisterously over her, and clearing the decks and closing up all hatchways and openings. So, though for a week she tossed and laboured in the gale, she was none the worse when it ceased; and indeed the seas she encountered were by no means so heavy as those with which she had battled on her voyage home from Spain.

While the gale lasted Reuben Hawkshaw took every precaution to enable him to keep his reckoning, heaving the log every half-hour, and noting constantly each change in the direction of the wind; so that when all was over he could tell within fifty miles the spot where the gale left her—for in those days the instruments of navigation were in their infancy, and sailors relied chiefly on the compass and dead reckoning to bring them safe to port, however long their voyage might be. Reuben Hawkshaw knew of no other plan, but as far as these went he was an excellent navigator, and was seldom many miles out in making a land-fall. As soon as the gale abated sail was again made on the ship and she proceeded on her course.

In another three weeks the mates were seen frequently to

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ascend into the tops, and the news spread among the crew that the Spanish islands lay not far ahead. The justness of the captain's reckoning was soon proved, for at daybreak one morning land was perceived directly ahead though still lying like a patch of low cloud on the horizon. A cheer broke from those on deck as soon as the mate proclaimed that to a certainty it was land they saw, and the watch below came pouring up. Another cheer saluted the captain as he came out from his cabin—a tribute to his seamanship in thus bringing them straight across the ocean on a path that no Englishman had ever before sailed. He, with the two mates, at once ascended to the foretop. From here, as the morning brightened, two other points of land could be seen far away on either hand.

“We are evidently approaching small islands. This is just what we hoped; my fear was that we might strike Hispaniola or Porto Rico. When we get nearer land we will lower our topsails, so as not to be so easily made out from the land. Now we will go below, and try and mark off our place on the chart.”

CHAPTER IV.

AMONG THE ISLANDS.

“NOW let us go through our calculations again,” the captain said when they entered his cabin.

“How long will you be, Captain?” the first mate asked.

“Half-an-hour, Standing.”

“Then I will come again, or if you want me before that send for me;” and the first mate went out on deck again, for though well skilled to handle a ship in all weathers, and as brave and hardy a seaman as sailed out of Plymouth, James Standing could neither read nor write; and though in a rough sort of way he could reckon the course a ship should lie, and make allowance for leeway and currents and baffling winds,

and could bring a ship into any port in England or the Low Countries, he was of no use in a matter of this kind.

Pengarvan was a good scholar, and Reuben had taught him what he knew of navigation, and always made him keep a log from the time when he first became a mate; at first comparing their calculations every day, and then but once a week; arguing over the allowances each had made for tide and leeway, and sometimes finding to his surprise on arriving in port that Pengarvan's calculations were even nearer to the truth than his own.

This was a great satisfaction to him, for he felt that if aught should happen to himself when on a voyage, Pengarvan could be trusted to bring the *Swan* home as safely and surely as he could himself. Roger had for the last two years been going through the same schooling; but as yet he was very far from attaining accuracy, being unwilling to make sufficient allowance for the great leeway that a vessel in those days made with the wind abeam.

"Now, Pengarvan," Reuben said in great glee, "bring out your log-book. We have not compared notes since we started, for till we expected to reach land there was no occasion to do so, as our general course was clear enough. Now let us see where you put her; and you too, Roger, let us see what hand you have made of it. I went through my calculations yesterday, and I am sure that there is no mistake in the figures. If I am right this is the island that we see ahead, the one called Samona, while that we see dimly away on the port hand is Mariguana. I don't see by this map any land marked that could be that which we see on the starboard hand. Now what do you make of it?"

"I put it more than a degree to the south-east, Captain; and believe that the three islands we see are those marked as the Caicos: the Great Caicos in the centre, North and East on either hand."

"And you, Roger, what do you make of it?"

"According to my calculation, father, we ought to be full two hundred miles from land, and heading straight for Abaco, the northernmost of these islands."

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The captain laughed and even Pengarvan smiled.

"I fear, Roger, it would be hardly safe to leave the ship in your hands at present. You are some six hundred miles away from Pengarvan's islands, and but seventy less from mine. Well, Pengarvan, whether you or I be right we may congratulate ourselves, for we have made a near cast indeed, seeing that it is eight weeks since we left England, and more than six since we sailed out of sight of Madeira; and that we traversed a sea altogether strange to us, and of whose currents we know nothing. We are both right to a day in our reckoning of distance, and neither of us need feel hurt if the other turns out right, at finding himself but sixty miles out on a voyage of such length as this.

"I headed for this point because, as I said, we must steer clear of the great islands, which are, as you know, wholly in the possession of the Spaniards, who have dispossessed the inhabitants, and use them as slaves for working the plantations and mines. As you see by the chart they have no posts in all these islands running from here north-west, nearly up to the mainland, except a small post at San Salvador. Now we will coast up through these islands till we get within sight of Columbus Point at the southerly end of San Salvador, for that was the island you know that was first discovered by him in '92; then we will strike westward to Andros, and after that shape her course due west. This will take us north of the west end of Cuba, and well out of sight of land; but we must be careful of our navigation, for as you see it is written here, 'Small islands innumerable scattered among those marked here, these being the principal. Many of these islands are low, and show but little above the water; sailing is very perilous, and not to be attempted at night.' You see, in this course we shall have the advantage of being well out of the ordinary line of passage of the Spaniards, who shape their course more to the southward, make Porto Rico their first landfall, and then have the two great islands, Hispaniola and Cuba, lying straight before them, free, as it seems, by the chart, from any dangers to navigation. Roger,

from this evening, we will compare our log-books day by day, so that you may learn where it is that you have gone wrong. But I can guess how it is; the wind is blowing chiefly from the east, and you will never make allowance enough for drift; and I have told you over and over again that with a light wind on our beam we drive a mile to leeward for every two we go on our course. There are many ships which will drift nigh a mile for every mile they sail in light winds. When the wind is brisk, and we are going fast through the water, then we drift but little, not more perhaps than one mile to six or seven."

"But why is that, father? How is it that a light wind blows us away sideways, and that a strong wind instead of blowing us more blows us less?"

"That I cannot tell you, Roger; you must leave those questions for wiser heads to settle. I only know that it is so—of that there is no doubt at all; but why, I have not the least idea. How does it strike you, Pengarvan?"

The Cornishman shook his head: "I have thought it over, Captain, many times. It seems to me sometimes that I have a sort of notion why it is, but it is not clear even to myself. I could not put it into words."

The first mate now looked into the cabin.

"Here we are, James. Pengarvan puts her here opposite these three little islands; I put her here some sixty miles away."

"It matters not at all, that I can see, which it is," Standing said; "one island is as good as another, so that it has got water and fruit. The tubs are getting low, and the men are beginning to need a change of diet, so I hope, Captain, you will lay her to at the first we come to, and get what we want whether it is Spaniard or native we have to fight for it."

"I hope we shall have to fight neither, Standing; but I don't think we are likely to meet with Spaniards—for all the islands in these groups are small ones, and the navigation dangerous. As for the Indians I fear we may not find them very friendly, seeing that they will, of course, take to arms for Spaniards, whom they have little reason to love. Still when

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they see that our intentions are peaceable, and that we wish only to trade, they may abate their hostility."

In three hours they were close to the island that they had first seen, which proved to be much nearer than they had supposed at first sight. It was low and thickly covered with trees, and of only a few miles' circumference.

"There is no chance of finding the natives hostile here," Reuben Hawkshaw said; "their numbers can be but scanty, and the only fear is that they may hide themselves in the woods at our approach, and refuse to have dealing with us. Get the lead ready to sound, James, and put some grease on the bottom that we may see what kind of holding ground it is."

As the sun had risen the wind had fallen, and the *Swan* was now moving very slowly through the water. They were about a mile from the land when the log was first hove.

"Eighteen fathoms, Captain," the mate reported, adding when the lead was hauled up, "and a sandy bottom."

Casting the lead regularly, they sailed on until within little more than a quarter of a mile of the shore, and there dropped anchor in six fathoms of water.

"I shouldn't like to be caught in a gale here," the captain said; "but if it did come on to blow we could get up our anchor and sail round to the other side of the island, where we should be in shelter."

"There are some natives, father," Roger, who was watching the shore, exclaimed; "they are waving green branches."

"Wave a white flag, Roger. Fasten anything white to a boat-hook and wave it. They may understand that, as the white flag is in use by all nations as a sign of peace, and they may have seen the Spaniards use it. Get one of the boats lowered, James—the long boat will be the best—let its crew take their arms with them, but lay them under the seats so as to land in peaceable guise. I myself will go ashore in her, and see what are the intentions of the natives. Get a couple of guns loaded, and if you see they attack us, fire a shot over their heads into the woods. That will be enough to frighten them. However, I think not that we shall have trouble."

A couple of boxes had already been got on deck by the captain's orders, and some strings of glass beads, hawk-balls, and other articles of trade taken out.

"You can come with me, Roger," the captain said; and in a few minutes the boat rowed towards the shore. Eight men sat at the oars and eight others were bestowed in the bow and stern. She would have carried twice as many, but the captain wished to avoid any show of force. The group of natives had increased by the time the boat reached the shore, and the captain saw that they consisted of two men who were apparently chiefs and some thirty of inferior rank. They continued to wave green branches, and their attitude was so peaceful that the captain did not hesitate to leap ashore as soon as the boat touched the strand.

"You follow me, Roger; and you others keep your hands on your arms ready to use them. But sit quiet, and do not show your weapons unless there be occasion."

The chiefs advanced with a timid air towards the new-comers, and on approaching saluted in an attitude of deep humility, using the Spanish word *Amigos*.

"*Amigos*—Friends," repeated the captain in a cheerful tone.

Roger gazed with intense interest upon these strange beings. They were in colour but little darker than the Moors who had tried to capture the *Swan* on her last voyage. They were of good height, but of slender figure; their countenances were soft and almost feminine, with large dark eyes and mild and gentle expression; they had no hair upon their faces; that on their heads was long and black; round their heads were light gold bands from which rose plumes of coloured feathers; they were naked above the waist, save that over one shoulder cotton cloths ornamented with fantastic patterns wrought in bright feathers were lightly thrown.

From the waist they wore cotton petticoats reaching to the knees; both had belts decorated by shells worked into intricate patterns, and from similar belts crossing the shoulder hung quivers filled with small arrows; they had necklaces and bracelets of bright beads of European manufacture, and both

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carried light spears, their bows hanging from their shoulders. Their followers were similarly dressed, save that the fillets round their heads instead of being gold were strips of skin decorated with shells and beads, and the mantles were of plain cotton. The captain took from his pouch two necklaces of large blue beads, and presented them to the chiefs, and also gave to each of them a small hatchet. These they received with tokens of gratitude, being specially pleased with the hatchets, which were articles vastly prized by the natives, and rarely bestowed upon them by the Spaniards, who were very chary of presenting the natives with anything that could be used as a weapon.

The captain then made a sign to the natives to approach, and bestowed a necklace of smaller beads upon each. He next called to the sailors, and bade them come ashore bringing with them only their hangers, for there was no doubt that the natives were friendly. While they were doing so, four of the natives, at the order of their chiefs, brought forward large baskets beautifully plaited, and, as Roger judged, made of the tender bark of some tree. The chiefs took these from their attendants, and opening them placed them before the captain with a gesture of humility. They were filled with fruits, all of which were of kinds such as neither Roger nor his father had seen before.

The sailors now brought forward an empty barrel, and the captain signified that they required water; one or two billets of wood were also shown, and the captain signified by action that he wished his men should be allowed to cut wood to carry on board ship. He also pointed to the baskets of fruit, and then showed some more strings of beads, and some hawk-bells, intimating his desire to trade. The natives readily comprehended the gestures. Pointing to the bog they intimated by signs that the ship should be moved round to the other side of the island, and that fruit would be taken to them there.

The men would gladly enough have wandered at once into the woods, to look at the trees and flowers which differed widely from anything they had ever before seen; but the

captain said: "We shall have time enough for that, men. Let us get off with this fruit; our comrades on board will be thirsting for their share. Then we will get the ship round on the other side; and all will have an opportunity to go ashore."

As soon as they got on board a portion of the fruit was set aside for the use of the officers, and the rest divided among the crew. Although they were ignorant of the names, the men enjoyed hugely the pine-apples, guavas, and custard apples that formed the major portion of the contents of the baskets; and cheerfully set about the work of getting up their anchor and setting the sails. But the wind had now entirely dropped, and the *Swan* scarce moved through the water. So anxious, however, were the men to land that they gladly obeyed the captain's orders to get out all the boats and tow her—although the heat was so great that at any other time they would have shrunk from such a labour. As soon as they reached the other side of the island, the anchor was dropped; and the men on board having already made everything snug, Captain Reuben called those who had been towing out of the boats:—

"My lads," he said, "I wish to say a few words before you land. In the first place you cannot all go, it would never do to leave the ship without sufficient hands on board to fight her, seeing that at any moment a Spaniard may come round one end of the island or the other and fall upon us; consequently, half must remain on board and take their turn on shore to-morrow. I wish to give no advantage to any; therefore, the boatswain shall put two pieces of folded paper in his hat, one being blank and the other having a cross upon it. If the blank paper is drawn the starboard watch shall go ashore, and the larboard take their turn to-morrow. If the paper with the cross comes out it will be the other way. One more matter: I shall expect the discipline on shore to be as good as it has been on board ship. The natives are to be treated well, and all that we get from them shall be by fair barter, and it shall be conducted for the advantage of all; the first mate and

boatswain will take ashore some of the goods we have brought for the purpose of trade, and they will buy not only such things as we require for the ship—fruit and vegetables—but whatever the natives may have to sell.

“All these things will be brought on board, and then those of you who wish for any of these articles as a token from the first island at which we touched, can take them, making an auction among yourselves, the sums to be deducted from your wages. In this way all will be on a fair footing, and the proceeds of the sale will go into the general fund to be divided at the end of the voyage. Nevertheless, I should advise you not to purchase now, but to leave it until we have finished all our business, and are on our homeward way; then we shall see what we have obtained, and each man can buy according to his liking. I say this because if you get things now they will litter up the ship, and will get broken, lost, or thrown overboard; and it were far better that everything remained packed in the hold until we are on the homeward voyage. Another thing: Let each man behave himself decently on shore; be gentle and kind to the natives, who, though but heathens, are a harmless people and friendly. Let there be no quarrels or disputes; and above all, let none meddle with the women. I warn you that any breach of these orders will be most severely punished; and that, moreover, anyone who does so offend will never have leave to go ashore again, not if we cruise for ten years among these islands.”

The second mate and Roger remained on board with the starboard watch, the drawing giving the advantage to the others; and these with the captain and first mate were soon rowing towards the shore. Those on board although disappointed that fate had decided against them, had their share of amusement, for a good many canoes afterwards came off to them filled with goods for barter, and as the captain before leaving had told the second mate that he could buy and sell with those who came out, a brisk trade was soon established. They had no fear of treachery from the natives, who were in such dread of the white men that they would not venture to

lift a hand against them, however great the odds might be, and they were therefore allowed to come on board and mix freely with the sailors. The contents of the canoes, which were fruit and vegetables, were spread out on the deck, and the mate and Roger bargained with them, giving them little looking-glasses and strings of beads in exchange for their wares.

"They are mighty reasonable in their demands," Roger said to Pengarvan. "It seems almost a shame to take these great baskets of fruit and vegetables in return for such trifles."

"They are not trifles to them," the mate replied, "and there is nothing unfair in the exchange. These things are to them what gold and jewels are to us: we would give gladly a score of boat-loads of vegetables for a diamond the size of a pea, and these glass beads are as valuable in their eyes as diamonds are in ours."

After buying up the main stock they trafficked with the natives for the little ornaments they wore, necklaces and bracelets cunningly worked with bright shells and seeds, and weapons of curiously carved wood. At nightfall the other boats returned, laden down with fruit and vegetables.

"We must buy no more of these commodities at present," Captain Reuben said, when he saw what had been purchased on board. "We have got enough to last us as long as they will keep, eat we never so heartily;" and indeed the next day a number of the crew were ill from the quantity of fruit that they consumed. This, however, soon passed off, and the change of diet did great good; the scurvy disappeared, and in a short time all—even those who had suffered most—were again fit for duty.

The following morning Roger and Pengarvan went ashore with the starboard watch. The captain again accompanied them, and for hours they rambled about the island, wondering at the strange trees and foliage and the bright flowers, and filled especially with admiration at the many birds with feathers like jewels, that flitted about among the bowers, and concerning which there was much dispute among the men—some asserting that they were a sort of great bee, while others maintained

that they were birds. So quickly did they fly that the men, although they tried hard, failed to catch any of them; but the dispute as to their nature was solved by the discovery that one of the chiefs had a robe fringed with the skins of these little creatures, and examining these they saw surely enough that they were birds, with feathers glistening in the sun like jewels of many colours. Captain Reuben persuaded the chief to cut off the fringe and sell it to him, giving in exchange for it the high price of four copper rings and a tiny looking-glass.

In the afternoon the crew set to work to re-water the ship, and by nightfall all the casks were filled up and the vessel was ready to proceed again on her way. The next morning sails were hoisted and the anchor weighed, the natives came out in great numbers in their canoes and surrounded the *Swan* as she glided away from her anchorage, waving their hands and raising cries of farewell—evidently greatly satisfied at the treatment they had received at the hands of their white visitors. For a fortnight the *Swan* cruised from island to island; but beyond giving the crew a run ashore at each, and so building up their strength and getting them in fighting trim should there be occasion to call upon them for action, little advantage was obtained from these visits. Fruit and vegetables were obtainable in abundance; but beyond these and little trinkets and feathers there was no trade to be done.

"It is clear," Captain Reuben said, as he and his officers were gathered in the cabin, "that there is neither gain nor advantage to be obtained from trade here. The natives have doubtless sufficient for their wants, which are of the simplest; but of wealth such as we prize in England there is none to be had. It is different with the Spaniards—they make slaves of these poor creatures, and force them to till their plantations, to raise crops for them, and to work mines; but we, who cannot do these things, can get nothing from a longer stay in these coasts.

"We touched here chiefly to get water and fruit to keep us all in health, and in that we have abundantly succeeded. We had best now shape our course westward, and try to find

this new land rich in gold, of which my friend the Spanish captain learned by report from the natives. So far we have fallen in with no Spaniards, but we may do so at any time; and although I have no fear of beating off any that might meddle with us, it would do us great harm did the news spread that a strange ship was in these waters: for they would assuredly send out expeditions in search of us from all their ports, as soon as the news reached them."

The others quite agreed with Captain Reuben's views, and the next morning the ship's head was pointed west. Two days later, when passing an island, they saw, on opening a headland, a port with many houses and a Spanish flag flying from a mast on shore. Two large Spanish vessels were lying there. They were apparently on the point of sailing, for the sails were already dropped. An exclamation of surprise broke from all on the deck of the *Swan*, and the men ran to the braces and sheets in order to trim the sails. "Steady, men!" Captain Reuben shouted. "Touch not sheet or tack; we must sail past as if bent on our own business; if we change our course now they will suspect that something is wrong. Pengarvan, do you get out the Spanish flag from the locker, and run it up to the peak."

This was done, though it was easy to see by the looks the crew cast towards the strange craft that they would gladly go in and fight them. "Another time, lads," Captain Reuben said cheerfully, as he saw their mood. "I doubt not we shall have enough fighting to satisfy you before we have done; but our object here is to trade and get rich. If thrashing the Dons comes in the way of business we shall do it contentedly; but there is no occasion for us to put ourselves out of the way to meet them. Supposing we were to go in and sink those two ships, as I doubt not we are men enough to do if we were to try it, they would see it all from the shore; and no sooner did we set sail again than boats would carry the news to every Spanish port in these quarters, and we should have a score of ships in pursuit of us in no time; and, whatever came of it, that would interfere with the hopes of gain with which we have sailed to

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these seas. This port must be a newly formed one," he went on, turning to Roger, "for there is no Spanish station marked hereabout in my chart."

The course which the *Swan* was taking would have carried her half a mile to seaward of the two Spanish vessels, but she now edged a point or two farther out. Doubtless the Spaniards were surprised at seeing that the vessel, instead of entering the port, continued her course; and it may be that they very soon discovered such points in her hull and rigging as set them wondering what she could be. Presently a gun was fired from one of the ships—as a signal, doubtless, for her to heave-to. The *Swan* paid no attention to the command, but kept on her course. In two minutes there was another flash and a puff of white smoke from the Spaniard, and a shot skipped across the water in front of the *Swan*. A growl of anger broke from her crew.

"Put up the helm," Captain Reuben ordered; and the vessel, which was running before the wind, came up till her head pointed straight to sea. Although the Spanish ships were still three-quarters of a mile away, a bustle was at once observable on their decks; men clustered at the bows, and could be seen at work there.

"They are getting up the anchors," Pengarvan said, as he watched them, shading his eyes with his hands. Three or four minutes later the sails were sheeted home, and the Spaniard began to move through the water, having set sail as soon as the anchors were tripped.

No sooner were they under weigh and the crews at their quarters, than they began to discharge their bow guns after the *Swan*.

"Shall we answer them, Captain?" James Standing asked. "We can bring a couple of guns aft, and fire over the rail."

"By no means," Captain Reuben replied. "At present they know nothing about us, and though they may guess that we are not licensed traders, with due authority to trade among the islands, I do not suppose they suspect for a moment that we are foreigners; but deem us a private venture

from one of their own ports. No Spanish trader would dare to fire on their own flag, and as long as we do not reply, they will suppose that we are only trying to escape the payment of some heavy fine, or perhaps forfeiture for breach of their regulations. No, they can fire away. They are not likely to hurt us. They are fully a mile behind us, and we shall soon leave them."

But in this respect the captain was mistaken. The Spaniards were both fast vessels; and although the *Swan* kept her distance, those on board presently saw that she gained nothing. The shot continued to fall around them, but the Spaniards worked their guns slowly; the pieces on their fore-castles were light ones, and though two or three shot passed through the sails of the *Swan*, they did but little damage.

"As long as they don't knock away a spar we will hold on," Captain Reuben said; "if they do, we will turn and fight then. But the wind is dropping a little, and I think that if anything we are gaining upon them now."

By the afternoon the *Swan* was fully two miles ahead, and the Spaniards had discontinued firing. The *Swan* was heading now to pass an island which had for some hours been visible ahead. Presently the Spaniards again began firing, although their shot fell in the water far astern of the *Swan*.

"What are the lubbers up to now?" James Standing said. "They cannot think they are going to frighten us into stopping, now that we have fairly got away from them."

Captain Reuben was anxiously gazing at the island ahead; they had laid their course to pass it to windward, as they sailed better close hauled than did the Spaniard, who had not only fallen behind, but had lagged to leeward nigh half a mile.

"They must be firing as a signal," he said; "there may either be a Spanish port in the island, or they may know that there are some of their ships lying there; though I can see no signs either of a port or ships."

"It would matter little if we could, Captain," Pengarvan said; "for any ships along that shore would be to leeward of us, and we should pass the end of the island long before they

could beat up there; but it would be awkward if there happened to be a port with two or three of their ships just beyond that point. We should be caught between two fires then, and have to fight the lot of them."

The captain nodded. "You are right, Pengarvan. We should be in a fix then; and four Spaniards at once is more than we bargained for."

They were now within two miles of the point towards which they were steering, and towards which the eyes of the two officers on the poop were directed. Five minutes later an exclamation broke from them simultaneously, as the sails of a lofty ship made their appearance over the extremity of the point, and a minute later a great hull came into sight.

"Helm to larboard," Captain Reuben ordered sharply; "we must run down the island; we can never weather that fellow that has just appeared. Ah! there are two others coming out; we are in a hornets' nest."

The sails were squared off, and the *Swan* was soon running before the wind almost parallel with the coast, but edging in a little, to keep her farther from the vessels that had first chased them; these had also changed their course, and their position to leeward now gave them an advantage. Ere long the *Swan* was almost abreast her late pursuers, who were about a mile and a quarter to seaward, while the other three Spanish ships, with all sails set, were a mile and a half astern, but a good deal nearer in shore.

"The sun will be down in another five minutes," Captain Reuben said, "and in half an hour it will be dark. The Spaniards can run quite as fast as we can—a bit faster, I think; but we can beat them close hauled. The wind is falling lighter and lighter; if it was not for that we would haul our wind and be off on the other tack, and throw all of them out. But it will be a dead calm before long, and they will be either lowering all their boats to attack us, or towing their ships up to us. If we were close under the land they might miss us, but they will be able to make us out here. At any rate, we must hold on as we are until the wind drops altogether."

After sunset the breeze died away rapidly, and by the time night had fully set in the sails dropped motionless, and the *Swan* ceased to move through the water. The captain at once ordered all the boats to be lowered, and the men swarmed into them, double-banking the oars. Hawsers were handed into them, and the vessel's head swept round in the direction from which she had come, but somewhat farther seaward.

"Now, lads," the captain said, "pull with a will. There will be a good supper and an allowance of strong ale when you come on board."

After rowing for half an hour, the captain ordered them to cease, and to keep silence. Listening attentively, he could hear in the still night air the sound of oars; but whether the boats were towing the ships, or rowing independently, he could not tell. Again the men set to work.

"I hope they are towing," he said to the first mate, "they would have no chance whatever of catching us, for our strong crew can take a vessel like the *Swan* through the water at twice the rate they could row their big ships. I can't see the fellows in shore, can you?"

"No, Captain; they are hid in the shadow of the land. I can make out the others, but they are a long way farther off than when we started."

"I expect we shall have the boats after us, Standing. Both lots can make us out, and can see that we are gaining on them. Ah! I felt a breath of wind. I did not expect it for an hour or two yet; but if the breeze springs up, we shall soon run away from them."

Stopping and listening again, they could hear the sound of oars from two directions.

"They are coming," the captain said; "the beat is quicker than it would be if they were towing; besides, it is a great deal more distinct than it was. I don't think they are more than a mile behind us. Ah! there is the wind again."

There was a deep flapping sound, and a rattling of blocks, as the sails bellied out for a moment, and then fell against the masts again. Captain Reuben went to the fore-castle;

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"Keep it up, lads. You won't have much longer to row, for the wind is coming. The Spaniards are after us, but they won't be up for a quarter of an hour, and I hope we shall get it before that; remember, every yard we can keep away from them is of importance. Put your backs to it, lads."

The *Swan* carried four boats, and strongly manned as these were she was gliding through the water at a fair rate. It was five minutes before another breath of wind came, but this lasted three or four minutes and greatly relieved the strain from the hawsers.

"She is going through the water now," the captain said, "they cannot be gaining very much upon us at present. Confound it!" he added a minute later; "there is an end of it again."

The boats were now but half a mile away, and the voices of the officers urging the rowers to exert themselves could be plainly heard. On the *Swan* the officers were all gazing in the direction from which the wind was to come. The yards were all braced sharply aft. Presently there was an exclamation of relief as they felt the wind in their faces and the vessel heeled a little over. The boats behind were but a quarter of a mile away now, while those from the vessels in shore were perhaps twice that distance. "If this is the true breeze we are safe," the captain said; "if not we shall have to fight for it." The men had already without orders cast loose the guns and armed themselves with pike and cutlass.

"Now, listen lads," the captain said as he went forward to the poop-rail, "if these fellows come up and try to board us, let no man utter a word; fight like bulldogs and as silently. We shall beat them off, never fear; no doubt they believe that we are their countrymen, who have broken their trading regulations, and are afraid of being overhauled. But if there is a word spoken they will know that we are foreigners, and we shall be chased wherever we go."

Then he went to the fore-castle, and bade all the men in the boats cast off the hawsers and come on board. They were

indeed no longer of any use, as the vessel was going through the water almost as fast as they could row ahead of her.

As they gained the deck he repeated the orders he had given—that strict silence should be observed in case the Spaniards came alongside. Everything now depended on continuance of breeze, and those on board the boats saw that the vessel was now holding her own with them. Orders to throw the ship up into the wind and heave-to were shouted, and as no attention was paid to these, several musket shots were fired at her, but the wind held, and faster and faster the *Swan* made her way through the water. At last the boats fell behind and were lost to sight.

“We are safe now,” Reuben said, exultantly; “we are to windward of them all, and shall have them well out of sight before morning.”

When day broke, indeed, the topsails of three of the Spanish ships could be seen on the horizon, but in two or three hours these sank out of sight, and the *Swan* was headed on her course west.

CHAPTER V.

SHIPWRECKED.

FOR six days the *Swan* sailed westward before a gentle wind; then clouds were seen rising in the north, and spreading with great rapidity across the horizon.

“We are in for a tempest,” Captain Reuben said; “never have I seen the clouds rising more rapidly. Get her sail off her, Standing, as quickly as possible.”

The crew fell to work, and in a very few minutes the *Swan* was stripped of the greater part of her canvas. But quickly as the men worked the storm came up more rapidly, and the crew had but half finished their work when with a roar and turmoil that almost bewildered them the gale struck the vessel. Her head had been laid to the south so that the wind should

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take her astern, and it was well that it was so for had it struck her on the beam, she would assuredly have been capsized, even had not a rag of canvas been shown, for the wind would have caught her lofty forecastle and poop. As it was she plunged heavily forward quivering as if from a blow. Then her bluff bows bore her up, and with a leap she sprang forward and sped along before the gale.

"I have seen us sudden a squall among the Greek islands," Captain Reuben shouted in the mate's ear; "but never elsewhere. I hope that this may prove as short as do the gales in that quarter."

"I hope so," the mate replied, "for we know not how far the land may be distant."

But though the captain knew it not, they had been caught in one of those furious gales that were afterwards the terror of the Spaniards, blowing for a week or ten days without intermission, and being the cause of the wreck of many a stout ship. The sea got up rapidly and the wind seemed to increase in fury as night fell, and for three days the ship ran before it. The waist was frequently deluged with water, and it required six men at the helm to keep her straight before the wind. The crew were worn-out with fatigue and want of sleep, for running as they were in this unknown sea none could say what might happen or when land might be sighted ahead. The captain never left the poop—he and the mates taking their places by turn with the men at the helm, for the slightest error in steering might have caused the vessel to broach to, in which case nothing could have saved her. Sheltered as was the caboose it was found impossible to keep a fire alight, and officers and men alike had to content themselves with biscuit and draughts of ale.

The vessel rolled till her bulwarks were under water and the yard-arms at times dipped into the sea, and the men on deck were forced to lash themselves to some standing object to retain their footing. The captain occasionally made his way forward to the forecastle, where the men not on duty were huddled together, and spoke cheerfully to them, saying that

the gale could not last much longer, and that as the *Swan* had weathered it so far she would hold on to the end. At the commencement of the storm a tremendous rain had fallen, but when this had ceased the sky had cleared up, and for the last two days the sun had shone out brightly and not a cloud had been seen.

When morning broke on the fourth day a cry of dismay broke from the wearied men on deck, for ahead could be seen land stretching away on both bows. The news brought the crew from below, and they clustered on the fore-castle gazing in the direction of this new danger.

"We must try and get some sail on her mizen, Standing," the captain said. "Our only chance is to bring her head to wind."

"We can try, Captain, but I fear that you will never bring her round."

"It is our only chance," the captain repeated, and with a loud shout he called for some hands to come aft. The mizen was shaken out, and as soon as the sheets were hauled aft the helm was put down. A cry burst from the crew as she came round, for as the wind took her on the beam she lay farther and farther over. A great wave struck her broadside, sweeping the bulwarks away as if they had been paper, and carrying a number of the crew off the fore-castle into the sea. Still farther over she went, and all thought that she would capsize, when there were a series of reports like musket-shots as the lashings of the shrouds parted. This was followed instantly by a crash as the mizen-mast snapped off two feet above the deck. Relieved of the strain the *Swan* righted somewhat. Another great wave swept over her fore-castle, still further diminishing the number of the crew, but it carried her head round. She came up on to an even keel, and again started on her mad course before the wind.

"Go forward, Pengarvan, and see how many hands we have lost," the captain said: "not that it makes much difference, for they have but gone a short time before the rest of us, for nothing short of a miracle can save us now."

It could now be seen that the coast was steep and rocky, and that the waves were breaking with tremendous force upon it. It was but about four miles distant, and in less than half an hour they would be upon it.

"We must try to anchor, Standing."

The first mate shook his head. "We will try, Captain, but our anchors will never hold her in the teeth of this gale; if they did the hawsers would go like pack-thread."

"I am afraid so, Standing; but there is nothing else to do."

The first mate went forward, and he and Pergarvan saw the anchors got in readiness and the cables ranged along, so as to run out with perfect freedom. Then Pengarvan made his way aft again to the poop.

"Do you mean to cut away the mast, Captain?" The captain nodded. "I wouldn't, sir," the mate went on. "She will never hold, mast or no mast; and if it stands we make a shift to run her head foremost on the rocks, and this will give us a better chance than if she drifts broadside on."

"You are right, Pengarvan. Yes, it will be better to leave it standing."

When within a quarter of a mile of the shore the helm was again put down, and as the vessel came partly round the the anchors were let go. The hawsers ran out rapidly, and the topsail, which was the only sail on her, was let go, the wind catching it and tearing it into ribands as it was loosed. There was a jerk and a surge as the anchors brought her up, but at the same moment a great wave struck her head. The cables parted, and she again swung round towards the shore.

"It is all over with us, my lad," the captain said to Roger, who was standing quietly beside him. "God forgive me, I have brought you all here to die."

"It is not your fault, father; it was all for the best; and we knew when we started that there were perils before us."

"Good-bye, my lads! We will die as we have lived—brave men; and may God have mercy on us all. Now, Roger, obey my last orders. Go forward, and climb up to the end of the bowsprit: it may be that if she strikes you may be able to

leap forward on to the rocks, they are somewhat lower just ahead than elsewhere."

"But I do not want to be saved if no one else is, father," Roger cried passionately.

"You have always obeyed me heretofore," the captain said, quietly, "and you will do so now. Go forward at once, and do as I say. God bless you, my boy." He clasped Roger in his arms in a moment's close embrace, and then pointed forward.

Roger's eyes were blinded with tears as he obeyed the order. The bowsprit in those days did not as now run out almost horizontally from the ship's bow, but stood up like a mast, leaning somewhat over the bow, and carried a yard and small square sail upon it. Roger climbed up as far as the yard, and then aiding himself by the hallyards, swarmed up until he reached the cap. When he did so the vessel was but little more than a hundred yards from the shore. The water was deep up to the rocks, for the waves struck on these unbroken, flying up in masses of spray which flew far over the land.

On his lofty post thirty feet above the forecastle and forty-five above the water, Roger was nearly level with the top of the rock ahead, and as the vessel rose on the waves could see a flat land extending far inland. He looked down; two or three of the sailors had followed him as high as the yard, and many others were gathered on the forecastle. Some were kneeling in prayer, others had thrown themselves down despairingly on the deck, but most were standing, looking forward with set faces at the rocky barrier so close at hand. Roger looked aft, the men at the tiller had quitted it now and gone forward; Standing and Pengarvan were standing one on each side of the captain. The latter took off his cap and waved it to his son, and the mates lifted their hands in token of adieu.

A cry from below caused Roger, as he returned the salute, to look round; they were but a ship's length from the rocks. Another moment a great wave lifted the vessel, and on its crest she went thundering forward. The rocks seemed to leap up against the spar to which Roger clung; it snapped off

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just below his feet, then a great volume of water and spray shot up from below, and he was thrown high into the air. The wind caught him and carried him away inland, and he fell with a crash that left him senseless. It was long before he recovered consciousness. As soon as he did so he crawled on his hands and knees to the edge of the cliff, and looked down. The *Swan* had disappeared, not a sign of her remained, not so much as a floating timber showed on the surface of the water.

Roger crawled back again for some distance, and then threw himself down and wept despairingly. He lay there for hours, until the heat of the sun blazing almost vertically down roused him. Then he got on to his feet and looked round. In front of him stretched a slightly undulating country. Patches of maize here and there showed that it was cultivated, and in the distance he saw a large village with buildings of a size that proved that the people had made some advance towards civilization. Slowly and painfully, for he was greatly bruised by his fall, he made his way to the nearest maize patch and eat several heads of green corn. Then he started for the village.

When within a few hundred yards of it, he came upon three women who were coming out with baskets on their heads. They paused as he approached them, and then, with a cry of astonishment and fear, turned and ran towards the village. Their cries brought a number of people to the doors; among these were many men who had caught up spears and bows and arrows at the alarm. Seeing but one person approaching, in a garb altogether strange to them, they stood in surprise. As he came up, their wonder heightened at perceiving that his colour was altogether different from their own, and they dropped their threatening weapons and stood as if paralyzed by wonder.

Roger had not faltered in his step as he saw them issue out. Death had no terror for him now his father and all his friends were gone, and he was altogether reckless of what befell him. The fearlessness of his demeanour added to the effect produced

by his appearance. His cap was gone, and the rays of the sun falling upon his fair hair added to the effect produced by his white skin. The natives, taking him for a supernatural being, bowed themselves to the ground before him in an attitude of adoration. The cries and uproar that but a minute before had sounded in the village suddenly ceased, and were succeeded by the hush of deep awe. Roger walked on between the prostrate natives and seated himself on a stone at the door of a hut. The natives gradually rose to their feet and approached him timidly. He made signs that he wanted to drink, for a raging thirst had been induced by the heat.

One of the natives ran into a hut and reappeared with a bowl, filled with a liquid, which he humbly presented to Roger. The latter patted his head in token of thanks, and then took a long drink of the contents of the bowl. These were totally unlike anything he had before tasted, being *pulque*, a slightly fermented drink, obtained from the juice of the agave, most useful of all the vegetable productions of Central America. A native, who was distinguished by his dress from the rest, now gave an order; and in a short time two women approached bearing a tray with some flat cakes of fine bread and fruits of different kinds. More to please the natives than because he was hungry, for he felt little inclination for food, Roger partook of some of these.

The chief then harangued him at considerable length. When he had finished, Roger, who had stood up while he was addressing him, said, "I do not know a single word of what you are saying to me, but I thank you for your kindness." He then shook hands with the chief, to whom that form of greeting was evidently new, and patted him on the shoulder. The chief then conducted him to a large house; it was no higher than the rest, but was built of stone well fitted together. The roof was roughly thatched, and could, Roger thought, afford but a poor shelter in time of rain. He did not know that, except at the commencement of a storm, rain was of comparatively rare occurrence upon the coast. Inside the house showed signs of comfort. There were some seats decorated with

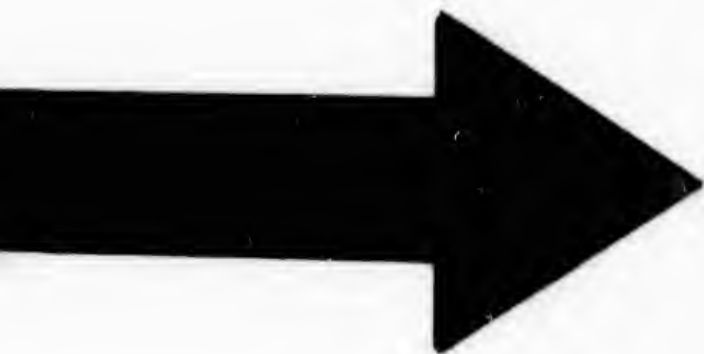
carving; a finely woven mat covered the floor; arms and utensils hung from the walls.

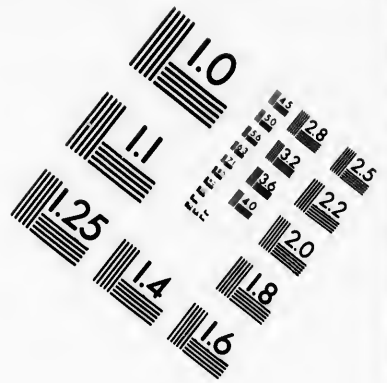
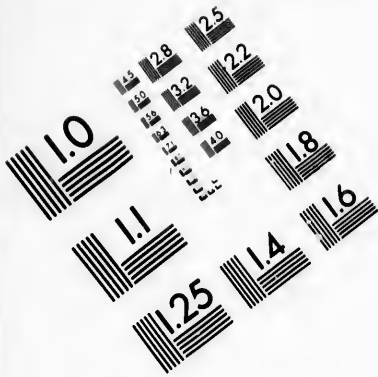
Several of the natives, evidently persons of considerable rank in the village, followed the chief in. Some girls and women came in from an interior room, and saluted the stranger with the greatest respect. They examined him timidly, one of the younger girls touching his hand gently as if to make sure that it was skin and not some strange covering that gave it its colour. Roger took off his jacket, which was by this time dry, and turned up the sleeve of his shirt; as he did so a general exclamation of surprise and admiration broke from the natives at the whiteness of the skin, which was far more striking to them than the bronzed hue of his face and hands. The chief made various signs which Roger at last understood to be a question as to whence he had come. He pointed in the direction of the sea, and tried to signify that he had arrived from a very long distance.

An hour passed, and Roger was beginning to wonder what the next move would be, when a native entered, and, saluting the chief, said something to him. The women and children at once retired. A few minutes afterwards the chief went to the door, and motioned Roger to accompany him.

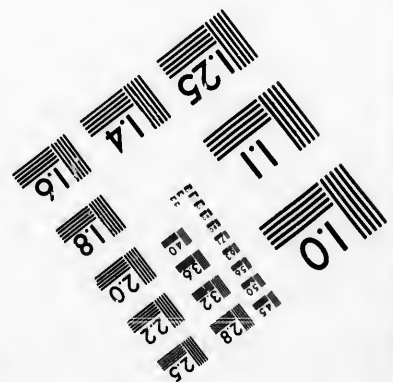
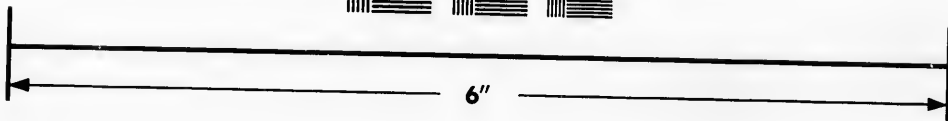
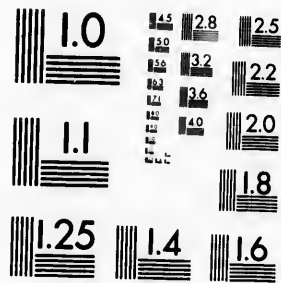
Coming down the street of the village was a procession. At its head walked two persons evidently of high rank. They wore mantles falling from their shoulders nearly to the ground, ornamented with designs executed in brightly coloured feathers; they had circlets of gold round their heads and heavy necklaces and bracelets of the same metal; beneath the mantles they wore short petticoats of soft white material. Their spears and their arms were carried behind them by attendants; behind these came a number of men and women walking in regular order, carrying bowls of fruit, trays of cooked food, and other offerings. Roger saw at once that they must have come from a place of importance, which must be near at hand, as they had doubtless set out upon the receipt of a message despatched by his present entertainer. He guessed that the report must have been a favourable one of him;







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and that the natives were impressed with the idea that he was a superior being; it was therefore needful for him to comport himself so that this impression should be confirmed.

The chiefs bowed profoundly as they approached him, stooping so far forward that one hand touched the earth and was then carried to their forehead. Roger did not understand the meaning of this, but he bowed graciously, as if accepting the homage that was offered. The bearers then advanced and placed the offerings on the ground. Among these was a mantle similar to that worn by the chiefs, but more richly embroidered. It struck Roger that, as his white skin excited so much admiration, it would be as well to show it; he was, too, somewhat ashamed of his garments, which were much worn, had turned a dingy hue from the sun and salt water, and had moreover shrunk much from their recent immersion. Taking up the robe, therefore, he motioned to the chiefs to stay where they were, and returning into the room stripped to his waist, and then throwing the mantle over his shoulders returned to the entrance.

Something like a shout of welcome saluted him; the whiteness of his skin as seen through the open mantle astonished the natives, and they accepted his assumption of the garment with which he had been presented as a sign of the benevolent intentions of this supernatural visitor towards them. The ambassadors now made signs in the direction from which they had come, and seemed to ask if he were willing to accompany them. He nodded his assent, and in a few minutes the procession again started, the chiefs taking their places one on either side of him, and the villagers falling in behind.

The women struck up a sort of chant in which all except the chiefs joined. For an hour they kept on their way, and then on ascending a small hill, a large town was seen. "Tabasco," the chief said, pointing towards it. Roger repeated the word, and in doing so evidently gave much pleasure to the chiefs. As they approached the town he could see many lofty buildings rising above it, and as they passed through a line of long palisades that surrounded the place a body of men issued

out to meet him. As they approached, they formed in order on each side of the road. All were armed with spears tipped with sharp shiny stones, and carried bows and arrows. They were dressed in doublets of thickly quilted cotton, capable of turning an arrow or resisting the thrust of a native spear, although they would offer but poor protection against English arrows or English weapons.

As they entered the town the streets were lined with similarly dressed soldiers, behind whom stood a crowd of natives, men and women saluting their strange visitor with loud cries of welcome. The procession continued its way until it stopped before a large building, at the entrance to which stood an aged chief. His mantle was completely composed of feather-work, and plumes of feathers sprang from the golden fillet that encircled his head. Behind him were clustered a number of inferior chiefs.

He welcomed Roger courteously but gravely, and Roger guessed at once that he was superior to the superstitions of his people, and that he viewed him with a certain amount of suspicion. Roger bowed, and taking off the jack-knife which hung in its sheath from a string at his waist, drew it out and presented it to the chief. The latter was evidently greatly struck by the gift. Gold and silver he knew, but this bright and shining metal was altogether new to him. He examined it closely, felt the edge and point, and then handed it to the chiefs behind him to be examined by them. Roger saw by his manner that he had been favourably impressed, for the weapon was as strange and mysterious to him as the visitant. The chief undid a large gold necklace that he wore, and offered it to Roger, who bowed and clasped it round his neck. The chief now led him inside the house, which was similar, but on a much larger scale, to that which he had before entered. Refreshments were placed before him; these he did not need, but thought it better to eat of them. While he was so doing an animated conversation was maintained between the chief and his followers.

After a time the chief made signs to him to follow him, and

conducted him to a smaller house close by, which he made signs to him that he was to consider as his own. Mats had been already spread on the ground, rugs made of quilted cotton for sleeping upon piled in a corner, vases of flowers placed about the room, and all made ready for occupation. An old woman followed by two young girls came forward and saluted to the ground; they were slaves whom the chief had appointed to wait upon the visitor. No sooner had the chief left than a perfect *levée* commenced and went on for hours, until it seemed to Roger that every man, woman, and child in the town must have called upon him.

Most of them brought little presents as tokens of good will. Garlands of flowers were thrown round his neck, baskets of fruit, cakes made from maize flour, dishes of meat of various kinds, little trinkets of gold, baskets containing beans and many other eatable seeds and a ground powder of brownish hue, of whose uses Roger was ignorant, but which he afterwards discovered to be cocoa, which furnished the most popular beverage of the natives. Not until it was quite dark did the stream of visitors cease; then the old slave dropped a hanging across the door, and one of the young ones brought forward to Roger, who was utterly worn out with the fatigues of the day, a bowl of steaming cocoa, and some cakes of fruit.

Roger found the cocoa extremely palatable, and wholly unlike anything he had ever before tasted; and it seemed to invigorate him greatly. After drinking he spread some of the quilted mats upon the floor and threw himself down upon them. The old woman had lighted a lamp, and withdrawn with the younger ones to an apartment behind, which served as their sleeping-place as well as kitchen.

Now that he was alone and had time to think Roger broke down entirely. Was it possible that it was but this morning he was on board ship with his father and friends, and that now all were gone, gone for ever, and he was in a strange land, cut off from all hope of return, surrounded by people who, if they were friendly to-day, might yet for aught he knew slay him

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on the morrow? For the time, however, his own fate occupied him but little. His thoughts turned almost exclusively upon his father, upon their voyages together, his kindness and care for him, the high hopes they had cherished when they started upon their voyage, and above all upon his parting words and the last gesture of farewell just as the ship struck.

For hours Roger lay and sobbed. At last he heard a slight movement in the room, and looking up saw one of the young slave-girls regarding him with a look of deep pity. To her, as to everyone else, Roger had appeared as a supernatural being, come from they knew not whence; but the lad's sobs had touched her human feelings, and shown her that he had sorrows like herself. Her look brought a feeling of comfort and companionship to Roger's heart, and as, on seeing that she was observed, she turned timidly to retire, he held out his hand to her. She approached and knelt down beside him, and taking his hand pressed it to her forehead. She was a girl of some fourteen years old, already according to Mexican ideas a woman.

"What is your name?" Roger asked.

The girl looked at him wonderingly, but shook her head. Roger thought a moment and then touched himself on the breast. "Roger," he said. He repeated the word several times; then he touched her lips and repeated "Roger," and seeing what was expected she repeated the word in a soft voice. He nodded again, touched himself and said "Roger," and then touched her. She now saw what he meant, it was his own name he had spoken, and he now asked for hers. "Malinche," she said, in her soft Indian voice.

"Malinche," he repeated, "you are a kind-hearted girl. I can see that, Malinche; and I hope we shall understand each other better one of these days. I suppose you are a servant or a slave, and are not in a much better condition than myself. Now you had better go and sleep." He patted her on the shoulder, pointed to the door by which she had entered, closed his eyes as if in sleep, and then said, "Good-night, Malinche." The girl uttered some words he did not understand; but as they ended with Roger, and with a nod of her head she stole

silently away, he supposed that it was something equivalent to his own Good-night.

Greatly comforted by this little incident, he rolled up one of the rugs as a pillow, laid his head upon it and was almost instantaneously asleep. He woke with a feeling of surprise; the events of the previous day seemed to him but a dream, and he looked round expecting to see the bulk-head of the little cabin he had occupied on board the *Swan*; but the first glance assured him of the reality of the dream, and that he was alone among a strange people. He sprang at once to his feet; pulled aside a cloth that hung before an opening that served as a window, and let the rays of the sun stream in.

"I want some water, old dame," he said, in a loud voice.

The old woman at once entered. Roger made signs by rubbing his hands together, and passing them over his face and head, that he wanted water. This the old woman brought in a basin formed of the half of an immense gourd, and a soft cotton cloth with which to dry himself. Then she brought in a small pot filled with something which looked to him like fat, but which he afterwards found was extracted from a vegetable, and put it down by the side of the water.

"I suppose that this is some sort of soap," Roger said to himself, and found on trial to his great satisfaction that it made an excellent lather. After a good wash he felt greatly refreshed, and now attired himself completely in Mexican costume, a pile of garments of all sorts having been placed in one corner of the room. When he had finished the two girls entered with a tray containing cocoa, fruits, and bread. He was about to address Malinche by her name; but the girl kept her eyes fixed upon the ground, and it struck him that she did not wish her late visit to him to be known, as it might bring upon her a scolding from the old woman whose voice he had more than once heard on the previous afternoon raised in shrill anger.

He therefore began afresh, first naming himself and then touching Malinche's companion. She did not at first understand, but Malinche said something in a low tone, and she

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then replied, "Nishka." Roger repeated the name and then touched Malinche, who at once gave her name. He next pointed to the contents of the bowl, and the girls replied together "Coca." Roger repeated the word several times, and then in the same manner learned the native names of the cakes and fruit. The old woman, hearing the voices, now came into the room. The girls spoke eagerly to her in their language, and when Roger touched her she at once answered "Quizinoa."

"That is pretty well for a first lesson," Roger said; "now I will eat my breakfast. I suppose that if anyone in this place did not have a stare at me yesterday, they will be coming to-day."

Visitors, indeed, soon began to arrive, and it was more than a week before the curiosity of the crowd was at all satisfied. But even this did not bring what Roger considered a terrible annoyance to an end, for the news had spread rapidly through all the country round of the strange white being who had come to Tabasco, and parties of visitors kept on arriving, some of them from a great distance.

Roger, however, had made a good use of his tongue. He kept one or other of the girls always near him, and by touching the articles brought to him as presents, the garments and arms of his visitors, and the various objects in his room, he soon learned their names. Almost every day the chief sent for him, for a talk; but as neither party could understand the other these conversations generally ended by a sudden loss of temper on the part of the cacique, at being unable to obtain the information he required as to the origin of his visitor, and the object with which he had come to his country. Having acquired a large number of the names of objects, Roger, for a time, came to a standstill; then it struck him that by listening to what the old woman said to the girls, and by watching what they did, he might make a step farther.

In this way he soon learnt "bring me," "fetch me," and other verbs. When the old woman was present the two girls were silent and shy; but as Quizinoa was fond of gossiping, and so was greatly in request among the neighbours, who

desired to learn something of the habits of the white man, she was often out, and the girls were then ready to talk as much as Roger wished. For a time it seemed to him that he was making no progress whatever with the language, and at the end of the first month began almost to despair of ever being able to converse in it, although by this time he had learnt the name of almost every object. Then he found that, perhaps as much from their gestures as from their words, he began to understand the girls, and in another month was able to make himself understood in turn. After this his progress was extremely rapid.

As soon as Malinche learned from him that he belonged to a great nation of white people, living far away across the sea, and that he had been wrecked in a ship upon the coast, she warned him against telling these things to the chief. "They hold you in high honour," she said, "because they think that you have come down from the sky, and might do them grievous harm if they displeased you. But if they knew that you were a man like themselves cast by chance upon their shores, they would perhaps make you a slave or might put you to death in one of the temples; therefore on this subject be always silent. When the chief asks you questions shake your head, and say that these things cannot be spoken of, and that it might bring down the anger of the gods were their secret told."

The advice seemed good to Roger, and he followed it. Now that he was able to talk in his language the chief soon plied him with questions as to whence he had come. But Roger always shook his head when the subject was approached, and said: "It is not good to talk of these things; evil might come to the land. I am here, and that is enough. I will tell you many things about other people who live far over the sea, and who are very great and powerful. When they go out they sit upon great animals, which carry them easily at a speed much exceeding that at which a man can run; they live in lofty dwellings, and when they go to war are covered with an armour made of a metal so strong that arrows would not pierce it nor

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The hearing of such wonders as these reconciled the chief to his disappointment at not learning more about his visitor. The knife Roger had given him was a never-ending source of wonder to the cacique and those whom he permitted to inspect it. Gold and silver and copper they knew, and also tin, which they used for hardening the copper, but this new metal was altogether strange to them. It enormously exceeded copper in strength and hardness; its edge did not, like that of their own weapons, blunt with usage, and they could well understand that if armour could be formed of it, it would be altogether unpierceable.

For a time Roger was every day at the chief's house, and his narration afforded astonishment and wonder to the audiences that gathered round him. At the same time Roger perceived that a difference of opinion existed among the principal men concerning him. Some believed as at first in his supernatural origin, and credited all that he told them, while others were of opinion that he was a man like themselves, only of different colour, and that these tales were simply inventions designed to add to his importance. The fact that month after month passed without his exhibiting any supernatural powers, or reproducing in any way the wonders of which he told them, added gradually to the strength of the party hostile to him.

"Why should this god, if he were a god, have come to dwell at Tabasco only to learn the language and behave as an ordinary man? He had been kindly received—why did he not bestow benefits in return? Were the fields more fruitful? Had any extraordinary prosperity fallen upon the people since his arrival among them? Had he taught them any of the arts of those people of whom he spoke? The gods always bestowed

benefits upon those among whom they dwelt. He did not ever pay reverence to their gods, nor had he entered a temple to worship or sacrifice: How then could he be a god?" Gradually this opinion gained strength, and Roger perceived that his popularity was decreasing. No longer were daily presents sent in by the inhabitants of Tabasco. No longer did they prostrate themselves when he walked in the streets. His stories were received with open expressions of doubt and derision, and he saw that ere long some great change would take place in his condition.

One morning, to his surprise, the chief with six men entered his chamber, and ordered him to come out and accompany them instantly. Much surprised at the order, Roger at once went out.

"You must go away for a time," the cacique said; "but you shall return before long." His guard conducted him eight or ten miles into the interior, and established him in a hut situated at a distance from any other dwelling. Three of them by turns kept watch night and day over him, refusing to answer any questions as to the cause of this singular conduct. Beyond being kept a prisoner he had nothing to complain of, being well fed and treated with all courtesy. A fortnight later he was taken back to Tabasco as suddenly as he had left it.

When he arrived there he learnt the reason of his being carried inland. A great floating castle filled with white men had arrived at the mouth of the river, and had opened a trade with the natives, exchanging glass beads, looking-glasses, and trinkets for gold ornaments and articles of Mexican workmanship. Their leader he heard was called Grijalva. The cacique had been afraid that if Roger had heard that other white men were in the river he would make an effort to join them, or if they heard that a man of their colour was in the town they would insist upon his being handed over to them; he had therefore hurried him away inland, and had issued the most stringent orders that none should by signs or otherwise acquaint the new-comers that a white man was in the town.

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A guard had been placed over the house in which Roger had dwelt, and none of those within it had been allowed to go out while the strangers were in the river. These had sailed away the day before Roger was fetched back. He was not altogether disappointed at having missed the strangers, who were of course Spaniards, for he wanted if possible to see something more of this beautiful country before he left; and he was, moreover, more than doubtful as to the reception he should meet with at the Spaniards' hands, when, by his ignorance of their language, they discovered that he was a foreign intruder in what they considered their territory.

CHAPTER VI.

ANAHUAC.

IT was now six months since Roger was wrecked on the coast of Tabasco, he spoke the native language with perfect fluency, and had learned all that was known as to the nations round Tabasco. Malinche was his chief source of information. She herself did not belong to the country, but, as she told Roger, to a tribe that had been conquered by far mightier people called Aztecs, who lived farther to the west.

It was from them, she said, that the people of Tabasco obtained their gold, which was there very plentiful and was thought but little of, as being useful only for ornaments, drinking-cups, and similar purposes. They dwelt in a city named Mexico, standing in the midst of a lake; there were kindred peoples near them, and the country generally was called Anahuac. All were subject to the Aztecs, and their armies had gradually conquered all the surrounding peoples. They possessed great temples, compared to which those of Tabasco were as nothing. Their gods were very powerful, and all prisoners taken in war were sacrificed to them. They had

rich mantles and clothing, and the Tabascans were but savages in comparison.

Being asked how it was that she, who was a native of such a nation, came to be a slave among the Tabascans, she replied with tears that she had been sold. Her father had been a rich and powerful cacique of Painalla, on the south-eastern borders of the Mexican kingdom; he had died when she was very young, and her mother had married again and had a son. One night her mother had handed her over to some traders, by whom she had been carried away. She had learned from their conversation that her mother desired her son to inherit all her possessions, and that she had, therefore, sold her to these traders. The daughter of one of her slaves had died that evening, and she intended to give out that Malinche was dead, and to celebrate her funeral in the usual way. The traders had brought her to Tabasco, and sold her to the cacique of that town.

"But this mother of yours must be an infamous woman, Malinche," Roger said indignantly, "thus to sell away her own daughter to be a slave!"

"Girls are not much good," Malinche said sadly; "they cannot fight and they cannot govern a people. It was natural that my mother should prefer her son to me, and should wish to see him a cacique when he grew up."

Roger refused to see the matter in that light at all, and was indignant at Malinche for the forbearance that she showed in speaking of the author of her misfortunes. This conversation had taken place at the time when Roger had first learnt to converse in the Tabascan language. The girl's statements with regard to the wealth of the country to which she belonged, had fired his imagination. This was doubtless the country concerning which rumours were current among the Spanish islands, and with whom it had been the purpose of his father's expedition to open trade. Malinche told him that they spoke a language quite different from that of the Tabascans. There were many dialects among the various peoples under the sway of the Aztecs; but all could understand each other, as they

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had all come down from the far north to settle in the country. Thinking the matter over he determined, if possible, that he would someday make his way over to Malinche's country, which seemed so far in advance of the Tabascans.

"The Spaniards will go there some day," he said; "and although they would kill me without hesitation, if they found an Englishman there before them, I might yet, in some way or other, manage to achieve my escape." Accordingly, he asked Malinche to teach him her language, and at the end of the six months he could converse with her in it almost as readily as he could in Tabascan, for in learning it he had none of the initial difficulties he had at first encountered in acquiring Tabascan,—the latter language serving as a medium.

The year which had elapsed since the *Swan* sailed from Plymouth had effected great alteration in Roger's figure; he had grown several inches and had widened out greatly; and was fulfilling the promise of his earlier figure by growing into an immensely large and powerful man. He was even now half a head taller than the very tallest of the natives of Tabasco; and in point of strength was still more their superior. Thus, although the belief in his supernatural origin was rapidly dying out a certain respect for his size and strength prevented any of his opponents from any open exhibition of hostility. The fact, too, of his perfect fearlessness of demeanour added to this effect. Roger carried himself well, and as with head erect he strolled through the streets of Tabasco, with a step that contrasted strongly with the light and nimble one of the slenderly built natives, men made way for him; while his sunny hair, which fell in short waves back from his forehead, his fearless grey eyes, and the pleasant expression of his mouth, rendered him a source of admiration to the women, who, with scarce an exception, still believed firmly that he was no ordinary human being.

One day when Roger was dressing in the morning he heard excited talking in the street and the sound of hurrying feet.

"What has happened this morning, Malinche?" he called out.

"The merchants have come," she said; "the merchants from my country."

As Roger had heard from her that a trade was carried on by Mexico with the surrounding countries, by merchants who travelled in parties, with strong bodies of armed men, and that they had been at Tabasco but a few days only before he had first arrived there, and might be expected again in about a year, he was not surprised at the news. He had, indeed, been looking forward to this visit; for he felt that his position was getting more and more unsafe, and that the cacique would not be able much longer to support him against the hostility of the majority of the men of importance in the town. What he had heard from Malinche had greatly raised his curiosity with regard to her country, and his longing to see these people whom she described as invincible in war, and so infinitely superior in civilization to the Tabascans. He had closely inquired from Malinche whether she thought he would be well received did he reach her country. Malinche's opinion was not encouraging. "I think," she said, "that they would sacrifice you in the temples. All our gods love sacrifices, and every year countless persons are offered up to them."

"It is a horrible custom, Malinche."

Malinche did not seem to be impressed as he expected.

"Why?" she asked. "They would be killed in battle were they not kept for sacrifice. The Aztecs never kill if they can help it, but take prisoners, so that death comes to them in one way instead of another; and it is better to be killed in the service of the gods than to fall uselessly in battle."

"I don't think so at all, Malinche. In battle one's blood's up, and one scarcely feels pain, and if one is killed one is killed and there is an end of it: that is quite different to being put to death in cold blood. And do they sacrifice women as well as men?"

"Sometimes, but not so many," she said; "and in dry weather they offer up children to Talloc, the god of rain."

"But they cannot capture them in war," Roger said, horrified.

"No, they are sold by their parents, who have large families, and can do without one or two."

To Malinche, brought up in the hideous religion of the Mexicans, these things appeared as a matter of course; and she could scarcely understand the horror and disgust which her description of the sacrifices to her gods caused him.

"And you think that they would sacrifice me, Malinche?"

"I cannot say," she replied, "the priests are masters in these things. If they said sacrifice, they would sacrifice you; but if they thought you a god, you would be treated with great honour. How can I tell? I think that they would give you greater honour than here, but of course I cannot tell."

"Why should they pay me greater honour, Malinche?"

"Because one of our gods was white. Quetzalcoatl was the kindest of our gods. He taught us the use of metals, instructed us how to till the ground, and laid down all the rules for good government. When he lived in Anahuac everyone was happy. Every head of corn was so big that a man could scarce carry one. The earth was full of flowers and fruit. Cotton grew of many colours, so that there was no need to dye it, and the very birds sang more sweetly than they have ever sung since. Ah! if Quetzalcoatl had always stopped with us, we should have been happy, indeed!"

"But why did he not, Malinche?"

Malinche shook her head. "He was a god, but not one of the greatest, and one of these grew angry with him—I cannot tell who, perhaps it was the god of war, who saw that the Anahuans were so happy that they no longer went out to conquer other people and to provide sacrifices for him—perhaps they were jealous because the people worshipped Quetzalcoatl more than them: anyhow they were angry with him and he was obliged to leave us. He came down to the sea, and took leave of the people, promising that he or his descendants would some day revisit them. Then he took his seat in his boat, which was formed of serpent-skins, and sailed away, and has never been seen again; but we all know that one day, if he does not come himself, white people will come from the sea

to us. I think, Roger, that you are one of the descendants of Quetzalcoatl; and I think my countrymen would think so too, and would hold you in great honour if the priests, who are very powerful, did not turn them against you."

"What was this god like?" asked Roger.

"He was tall in stature, and he had a white skin; and his hair was not like yours, for it was long and dark and flowed over his shoulders, and he had a great beard; but as you are tall and white, you are like him; and as he went towards the rising sun it may be that afterwards his hair changed from black to a colour like yours, which seems to me brown when you are sitting here, but gold when the sun falls on it."

"So it seems, Malinche, that I may be sacrificed, or I may be taken for a god! I would much rather that they would be content to treat me for what I am—a man like themselves, only of a different race and colour."

Roger had many conversations of this kind with Malinche, and as he felt his position becoming daily more precarious among the Tabascans, had come to believe that he should have at least as good a chance among the Aztecs as where he was. In return for all the girl told him about her country, he told her much about his own. He explained to her that there were many peoples among the whites, as among the reds; and they fought against each other in battle, having weapons which made a noise like thunder and killed at a great distance. He told her how one of these peoples, named Spaniards, had conquered many islands not very far distant from Tabasco, and how assuredly they would come in time and try to conquer this country, too. He explained that, while the nation to which he belonged was at present at peace with the Spaniards, they were not allowed to come into this part of the world; and that had he and those who had sailed with him fallen into their hands they would have been all put to death.

The news, then, that the Aztec traders had arrived was a matter of as much interest to Roger as to the people of the town. These looked forward to purchasing many things which they could not otherwise obtain, for the gold ornaments, the

rich feather mantles, and most of the other articles of superior manufacture which Roger had seen were not the work of the natives of Tabasco, but of their powerful neighbours.

The traders would stay, Malinche said, for four or five days at least; and Roger therefore thought it better not to go out to see them until he learned what were the cacique's views concerning him. He, therefore, remained quietly at home all day. Upon the following morning he received a summons from the cacique.

"White man," the chief said, "I have spoken to the Anahuac traders concerning you, and they have a great desire to see you. Therefore you will this morning accompany us to their camp."

An hour afterwards Roger started with the cacique, and a numerous body of the latter's counsellors and attendants. The encampment of the Anahuacs was a quarter of a mile from the town. In the centre rose a large tent, the abode of the merchants, and around, ranged in regular order, were the rough huts erected by their escort. These were assembled in military array; they were, like the Tabascan soldiers, clad in thick quilted doublets. Their spears were tipped with copper or with obsidian, a stone resembling flint, of great hardness and capable of taking a very sharp edge. In front of the tent were several banners, embroidered in different devices in gold and feather work.

Roger afterwards learned that merchants were held in far higher consideration in Anahuac than in Europe, that their business was considered as one of great honour, and that they were permitted to assume what may be called heraldic devices on their standards, to carry bright-feathered plumes, and to wear gold ornaments—such decorations being only allowed to warriors who had, by their deeds in battle, been admitted into an institution which closely resembled that of knighthood, all others dressing in plain white cloths woven from thread obtained from the aloe. Even members of the royal family were not exempted from this law.

The whole trade of the country was in the hands of these

merchants, who traded not only to its utmost borders, but with neighbouring people. They were allowed to raise forces sufficient for their protection; they furnished the government with descriptions of the people they visited, and often afforded the State a pretext for wars and annexations by getting up quarrels with the natives. They resembled, in fact, the East India Company during the last century, mingling in their persons the military and mercantile character.

In addition to their soldier escort, they took with them on their journeys a vast number of slaves. These carried the merchandize, made up into packets weighing about eighty pounds. Many of these slaves had been instructed in the arts of the Aztecs, and there were among them musicians, singers, dancers, and workers in metal and feather work, and these were sold at high rates to the people with whom they traded.

The merchants, who were attired in rich feather mantles with plumes of bright feathers upon their heads, came to the entrance of their tent when the cacique with his company approached. After some talk between them and the chief, by means of an interpreter, Roger was brought forward from the rear of the company. The merchants inspected him with grave curiosity. They turned and talked among themselves; then they invited the chief to enter their tent. He remained there for some time, and when he came out again returned to his companions, and ordering four of his soldiers to accompany him back to the town, left the rest of his party to traffic as they chose with the merchants.

He did not address Roger until they reached his house, and then bade him enter with him. "White man," he said, "the Anahuan merchants wish to carry you away with them to their own country, and have offered in exchange sundry slaves and articles of merchandize. I would not have parted with you; and have told them, indeed, that you were no slave of mine to sell as I chose, but a stranger who had come to visit me from I know not where; and have also told them that if you go with them it must be of your own free choice, for that misfortune might fall upon my people did I treat you with

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ought but honour. It is, then, for you to decide. You know that I wish well to you, and hold you in great esteem, deeming that your visit here will give prosperity as well as honour to Tabasco; but there are those among my people who are foolish and headstrong, and who view your coming with suspicion. The priests, too, are unfavourably disposed towards you, and have long urged that you would make a most acceptable sacrifice to the gods. So far I have withstood them, but I am old and cannot look to live long, and after I have gone your enemies would assuredly have their way; therefore I think it is for your good that you should go with these merchants."

The cacique was speaking the truth but not the whole truth. The merchants had offered in slaves and goods an amount which had excited his cupidity; and he was, moreover, glad to be rid of the presence of one who was the cause of constant dispute and trouble in his councils. At the same time he still believed in the supernatural powers of his visitor, and was afraid that if the latter went against his will, he might invoke all sorts of ills and misfortunes upon Tabasco. He was much relieved then, when Roger replied that he was willing to go with the merchants.

"I have seen," he said, "that my presence here is unwelcome to many, and that I was the cause of trouble. I know too, Cacique, that you have befriended me to the utmost, while many others have been against me. I am willing, then, to depart."

Great was the grief of Malinche when she learned from Roger that he was to go with the Anahuans.

"Could not my lord take me with him?" she asked presently, as her sobs lessened in violence.

"I shall be but a slave myself, Malinche."

"If you ask the cacique he will let me go with you: I am but of little value to him."

Roger did not answer for some minutes; he would have been glad, indeed, to have had Malinche—who had been his companion and friend, and whom he regarded almost as a sister—with him, but there were many things to be considered. He might be

well received in this new country, but he might be sacrificed to these gods of theirs; and in that case Malinche might share his fate—as she said that even women were offered up. Even if well received he might not be able to have Malinche with him. Besides, of course he did not want her as an attendant, and in what other capacity could she go? If he got into trouble and had to try to escape from their land, he might not be able to carry her off too. If they were separated what was to become of her? She could not go to the mother who had sold her as a slave. No; certainly, he decided, he must go without her.

“Malinche,” he said, after a long silence, “it cannot be. There is no saying what my fate may be among your people. I may be offered up to those terrible gods you told me of. I may be treated as a slave. There is no saying what might happen. At any rate I shall be unable to afford you any protection. Were we separated, as it is almost certain we should be, where could you go, or what would become of you? Besides, how in any case could we keep together? I could not have you as a slave, even if I wanted to do so, in your own country; and how else could you go with me? If you like, I will ask the cacique for your freedom, so that you might travel back to your own country with the merchants?”

The girl shook her head, “I have no friends there now,” she said, “where should I go?”

“That is just what I am saying, Malinche. There is nowhere for you to go except with me; and I do not see how you could go with me. If you do not like this, I will promise you that if things turn out well with me in your country, I will send by the next merchants who come here, and buy you from the cacique, and find friends for you there and place you with them.”

“You would have wives there,” the girl said passionately; “and you would never think any more of me.”

Roger burst into a loud laugh.

“Why, Malinche, I am only a boy! I am not yet eighteen; and in my country we do not think of taking wives until we

are eight or ten years older than that. It is a serious thing with us, for each man has only one wife; and it behoves him, therefore, to be very careful in making his choice. I hope long before it comes to my time for thinking of marriage to be back in my own country and among my own people. If I were to marry here how could I ever think of going away? I could not go and leave a wife behind me. I could not take her away with me, because she would never be happy among a strange people, any more than I should be happy if I lived here. No, no, Malinche, there is no fear of my marrying any more than there is of my forgetting you. You can trust me. If I live and do well in your country I will send for you; and I will tell your people that you have been as a sister to me, and will see that this mother of yours does you justice, and that you shall come to your own again, and you shall marry some cacique of your own choice. If you do not hear from me you will know that things have gone badly with me, and that either I have been sacrificed to your gods, or that I am held as a slave and have no power whatever to help you."

Malinche said no more; her dark eyes were full of tears, but with the habit of submission natural to Mexican women, she simply took Roger's hand and placed it against her forehead: "Malinche will wait," she said, and then hurried from the room.

Before leaving, Roger gave Malinche several of the handsomest of the bracelets and necklaces that had been bestowed on him in the first flush of his popularity at Tabasco, and gave presents also to the old woman. The two girls wept bitterly when he said good-bye to them, and Roger himself had to fight hard to restrain his tears.

"It is as bad," he said to himself, "as it was saying good-bye to Dorothy and Agnes. Colour does not matter much, after all. Malinche is just as good and kind as if she were white."

The cacique himself conducted Roger to the Anahuac encampment. He had that morning made him various presents of robes and mantles, for he was very desirous that his visitor should part in good will from him; and he again

impressed upon him the fact that he only parted with him because he felt that he could not protect him from the ill-will of some of his people.

The merchants made no secret of their satisfaction as soon as they had handed to the cacique the goods and slaves they had agreed to give in exchange for Roger. They had, like the cacique, pretended to be indifferent as to the bargain, and had haggled with him over the terms of the purchase. But both parties were equally desirous of concluding the agreement; and while the cacique considered that he was making an excellent bargain for the visitor who had voluntarily placed himself in his hands, the merchants were still more delighted.

In the first place, the Mexicans were, as Malinche had told Roger, looking for the arrival of Quetzalcoatl, or of a white descendant of his from the sea; and, if Roger were to turn out to be the expected god, the honour which would fall upon them as his producer would be great indeed. But even should this not prove so, they would gain great credit, to say nothing of profit, by bringing home so singular a being who would either be received in high honour by the king or would be one of the most acceptable sacrifices ever offered to the gods. As soon, therefore, as the cacique had left they addressed Roger in terms of high respect, and presented to him some of their most handsome feather robes, tiaras with plumes, ornaments, and arms.

To their stupefaction Roger replied in their own language, and as they were in ignorance that the cacique possessed a country-woman of their own among his slaves, they regarded this as a miracle of the most singular kind, and as an indisputable proof of the supernatural nature of their visitant. It was true that he did not speak as a native, but Quetzalcoatl himself might well have forgotten somewhat of his own language, in his hundreds of years of absence from Mexico. The large tent was at once placed at Roger's disposal, the merchants contenting themselves with a smaller one raised beside it. A number of slaves were told off to attend upon him, and his meals were served with the greatest ceremony and deference.

That night, as Roger lay upon the soft pile of quilted rugs,

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prepared for him, his mind was sorely troubled as to his position. Was he right in allowing them to deceive themselves into a belief that he was a supernatural being? Ought he not rather to tell them that all these gods they worshipped were false, and that there was but one true God: He who was worshipped by the White men? Thinking it over in every way, he concluded at last that there was no necessity for him at present to undeceive the Anahuans: he would do no good by doing so, and would ensure his own destruction. He resolved however, that nothing should induce him to pay honour to their gods, or to take any part in their bloody sacrifices.

"They can kill me if they will," he said; "but I am not going to be false to my religion. If they should not kill me I may be able in time to persuade them that their gods are false; but for the present it would be madness to try to do so. From what Malinche said they are devoted to their religion, and the priests are all-powerful. If I am to do any good, therefore, it must be done gradually. What should we think at home if an Indian were to arrive, and to try and teach us that our God was a false one? Why, he would be burnt at the stake in no time. And one cannot expect that these Indians would be more patient in such a matter than we should. When the Spaniards come they will doubtless overthrow their gods, and force them to be Christians, just as they have the peoples in the islands."

The next morning, early, the tents were pulled down, the slaves loaded up with what merchandize remained unsold, with the tents and provisions for the journey, and the caravan started for the west. A party of the soldiers marched first; then came the merchants with Roger and a small guard of armed men; they were followed by the slaves, and another body of troops brought up the rear. For six days they passed through a country more or less cultivated, with villages scattered about. One of these was always chosen for their stopping place, and Roger admired the regularity and order with which the encampment was formed, and the good conduct observed in the dealings with the people.

Provisions were obtained by barter, and the inhabitants mingled fearlessly with the trading party. He remarked on this to the merchants, who replied, that it was always their custom to keep on the most friendly terms with the people.

"Our caravans," they said, "visit all the countries round our own, and did one of them ill-treat the natives, the others would suffer for it. Therefore, we are always particular to give them no cause for dissatisfaction. The empire is extensive, and many parts of it are but newly conquered, therefore we should be gravely blamed were we to embroil ourselves with its neighbours, until the king desired to carry his arms in that direction. Sometimes we have trouble. We were with a party who, a few years back were attacked of the people of Ayotlan. We saw that trouble was coming, and fortified our camp; and for four years carried on war with the town, and in the end captured it. But this was forced upon us, and we had the approval of the king. All those concerned in the struggle were permitted to have banners of their own and military emblems."

"How did you supply yourselves with provisions all the time?"

"The country-people were neutral; that was the advantage we had from having always treated them well, while the Cacique of Ayotlan had been a tyrant, and had greatly oppressed them. So they brought in provisions to us for sale, and we had less difficulty in that way than the people of the town."

At last the villages of the Tabascans were left behind. For some days the caravans travelled through a very sparsely populated country, and then arrived at a large village, where the Anahuac language was spoken.

"We are now in the country of the king," the principal merchant said. "All over it you will find the same language spoken; for although there are many people who lived under their own chiefs, and many of whom have been but lately conquered, the language is similar, though spoken with differences, for all the tribes came down from the north and settled here."

"And who dwelt here before they came?"

"A people called the Toltecs. They were a great people, well instructed in agriculture, great workers in metals and builders of grand cities."

"And what became of them?"

"It is not known, but misfortunes came upon them, famine or disease, and it is said that they went away to the south. Then came a people called the Chichimecs, a barbarous people from the north, whom we found here when we came. Of us, the greatest tribe were the Aztecs, who settled on one side of the great lake and built a city there, called Tenochtitlan, or sometimes Mexico, from the great war-god Mexitli. Another great tribe were the Tezucans, to which we belong; and our capital is Tezucoco, on the eastern side of the same lake. Mexico and Tezucoco formed an alliance, and with us was Tlacopan, a smaller kingdom hard by. It was agreed that in all wars, one-fifth of the spoil should go to the Tlacopans, and the rest be divided between the Aztecs and the Tezucans. This alliance has remained unbroken, and together we have conquered all the countries round and from sea to sea."

"What sea?" Roger interrupted.

"There is on the west another great sea like this on the east, which stretches away no man knows whither; and between these two seas all the peoples save one acknowledge the dominion of Mexico—for although we are in alliance, the Aztecs have of late years taken the lead, for they have had very great monarchs, and are more war-loving than we of Tezucoco; and our kings and those of Tlacopan acknowledge the Aztecs to be the leading power, and give to their king the title of 'Emperor.' We maintain our own laws and usages. Our king places the crown upon the head of each new monarch of Mexico, but we own him to be the chief of our Confederacy, and the more distant countries that have but recently been conquered have been assigned entirely to the Aztecs, although we have had our proper share in the slaves and spoil taken in the war."

"And what is the one state that has not been conquered by your Confederacy?"

"Tlascala; it lies high up among the mountains, and although but a small state has maintained its independence, and has several times repulsed the attacks of our best soldiers."

Roger thought that Tlascala must be a sort of Mexican Switzerland.

"It is singular that a small state should have resisted so long," he said.

"They have not been very often attacked," the merchant replied; "there is little to be got from them but hard knocks; the country is not fertile, the cold is too great, and they have only the necessities of life. Except for slaves and for sacrifice to the gods, there is nothing to be gained by their conquest."

"And you all worship the same gods?" Roger asked.

"Assuredly," he said, "although some are thought more highly of in one kingdom, some in another. Mexitli—or as he is generally called, Huitzilopotchli—is of course the greatest everywhere; but he is worshipped most of all by the Aztecs. Quetzalcoatl is also greatly worshipped."

As he spoke the merchant glanced furtively up at Roger. The lad saw that this was a favourable opportunity for creating an impression. He smiled quietly: "It is right that he should be," he said, "since he taught you all the good things you know, and was, like myself, white." This proof of the great knowledge possessed by the being before him vastly impressed the Mexican. How could this strange being know the Mexican tongue and be acquainted with its gods unless he were one of them? It had pleased him to assume ignorance of other matters, but doubtless he was well aware of everything that had passed in the country since he left it. Henceforth the respect which he and his companions paid to Roger was redoubled.

As soon as they had reached the borders of Mexico, a swift runner had been despatched to the nearest post with a message to be sent forward to the King of Tezeuco, with the tidings of the arrival of a strange white being in the land, and asking

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for instructions as to what was to be done with him. In the meantime the merchants told Roger that they wished him to abstain from going out into the various villages and towns at which they stopped.

"Until we know what are the king's wishes concerning you it were better that you were not seen. In the first place all this country by the coast is under the Aztec rule, and as soon as you were seen, messages would be sent forward to Mexico, and the Emperor might desire that so great a wonder should be sent direct to him; whereas if our own King sends first for you, you would be his property as it were, and even Montezuma would not interfere. It will not be long before an answer arrives, for along all the roads there are post-houses two leagues apart from each other. At each of these couriers are stationed, men trained to run at great speed, and these carry the despatches from post to post at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour."

"But the messages must get changed, where they have to be given so often?"

"Not at all," he said, "the couriers know nothing of the despatches they carry."

"Oh, they are written despatches?" Roger said. "Then you possess the art of writing?"

"Writing, what is writing?" the merchant asked.

"Letters are inscribed on paper," Roger said; "so that the person receiving them at a distance understands exactly what the one who wrote wished to say."

The merchant shook his head.

"I know nothing of what you call letters," he said, "we draw pictures on a fabric formed of prepared skins, or of a composition of silk and gum, but chiefly on a paper prepared from the leaves of the aloe. Besides the pictures there are marks, which are understood to represent certain things. These picture despatches are made in the form of rolls or books. I myself have a slave who is skilled in such work, and who has depicted you and added all particulars, and the roll has been forwarded to Tezcuco."

CHAPTER VII.

A WONDERFUL COUNTRY.

SO anxious were the merchants to avoid arriving at any town of importance, where there would be an Aztec commander and garrison, until they received an answer from Tezeuco, that they travelled by very slow stages, camping in small villages where they could obtain water and supplies. Roger asked many questions of them as to the country, and learnt that the hot and arid soil they were now crossing extended only about one-third of the distance to be traversed. Then that they would pass over a range of lofty mountains offering great difficulties to travel, that the cold was extreme, and that snow lay almost continuously upon the highest summits. After crossing this range they would journey across a rich country and descend at last into a most lovely and fertile valley, in which lay the lake, upon which the capitals of the two countries were situated.

The country they were now traversing varied considerably. In some places it consisted of parched and sandy plains almost free of vegetation. In others, where the rains were less able to drain quickly away, were districts of extraordinary fertility. Here grew the cocoa, vanilla, indigo and aromatic shrubs innumerable, forming thick and tangled jungles, impervious to the foot of man. Flowers of gorgeous colours bordered these groves, and lofty trees of foliage, altogether strange to Roger, reared their heads above them. The lad was delighted with the extraordinary richness of colour, and the variety of the foliage, but he would have enjoyed it more had it not been for the intense heat of the sun and the closeness of the air.

They crossed several large streams. The slaves cut down the great rushes which bordered them, and tying these together in bundles, formed rafts, upon which four or five at a time were ferried over. Roger learned that the principal road from the coast ran from Cempoalla, a large town near the sea, but that

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this lay a long distance to the north, and that the route they were travelling ran nearly due west to Tepeaca, and thence north-west to Pueblo, after which the towns lay thickly all the way to the lake. As far as Roger could learn the distance from the coast which they had lately been following to Mexico was by this route about three hundred miles.

On the fifth day after the messenger had been despatched, a courier ran into the camp just as the caravan was about to start, and handed to the chief merchant what looked to Roger like a portfolio. This, indeed, was something of its character; it consisted of two thin boards, within which was a sheet of paper. It contained a number of paintings and signs of which Roger could make nothing, but the merchants informed him that it expressed the satisfaction of the King of Tezcuco at the news that had been sent him of the arrival of a strange white personage in the land; that the priests would consult the auguries, and decide whether it boded well or ill for the country; and in the meantime that they were to journey on to Tepeaca, where they would be met by an envoy charged to receive the white stranger and to conduct him to Tezcuco.

The merchants themselves were only able to gather the general contents of this picture despatch, but the slave who had drawn the one sent forward, interpreted every sign and colour, for Roger found that colours as well as signs had their meaning. He learned from the merchants that this picture-writing was a science in itself, and that it needed years of instruction and labour to acquire it. In every town and village there were certain persons skilled in the art, so that messages of all kinds could be sent to the capital, and orders and instructions received. The national archives were entirely written in this manner, and in the temples were immense stores of these documents, affording information of every event of interest, however minute, in the history of the people.

The caravan now pushed on rapidly. After travelling, as Roger calculated, nearly a hundred miles from the sea, the ground began to rise rapidly, and in a single day the change in temperature was very marked. Roger felt the sense of

listlessness and oppression, which had weighed upon him while crossing the low country, pass away as if by magic; and it seemed so him that he was again breathing the air of Devonshire. The vegetation had greatly changed; the vanilla, cocoa, and indigo had disappeared, and trees totally different from those of the plain met his eye.

Another day's march, and they were four thousand feet above the sea. Here everything was green and bright, showing that rain constantly fell. Groves of a tree of rich foliage, which was, the merchant told him, the liquid amber tree, grew near the road, while on both sides lofty mountains rose precipitously to a great height, their summits being clothed in snow.

Some of these, he heard, had in times past burnt with terrible fires, and vast quantities of melted rock flowed over the country, carrying destruction in course. In many cases the road was a mere track, winding along the side of these mountains with precipices yawning below. A day's march through the mountains brought them into a lofty plateau, some seven thousand feet above the sea. Here were wide-spreading forests of trees, which Roger recognized as large oaks and cypress. Around the villages were clearings, and whereas in the plains be'ow maize was chiefly cultivated, the largest proportion of the fields here were devoted to plantations of the aloe or maquey.

Here, even at midday, the temperature was not too hot to be pleasant, while at night the cold was great, and Roger was glad to pile the thick quilted rugs over him.

After traversing this plateau for some distance, they came upon another range of hills, far loftier than those they had before crossed, and vastly higher than anything Roger had ever before beheld in his travels. These mountains were, the merchant told him, the Cordilleras; they extended from unknown regions in the north through Anahuac to the south, The snow never melted upon the summits, and several of the highest of these were terrible volcanoes, whose eruptions were dreaded by the whole nation.

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"the earth trembled and shook so that men could scarce stand upon it, houses were thrown down, and terrible destruction of life and property took place. Fortunately, these are rare occurrences; but several of them have taken place since the time when the Aztecs first established themselves here."

The passage through this range was attended with real hardship. Roger, accustomed to our English winter only in the mild climate of South Devonshire, felt the cold to be severe; but the natives suffered far more, and the merchants continued their march right through one night, for the labour of carrying their burdens kept the blood of the thinly clad slaves in motion, whereas if they had halted many would have succumbed to the cold. At last the path began to descend, and soon after daybreak, as the road crossed a shoulder of the hill, they saw a plateau similar to that they had left stretching out below them as far as the eye could reach. Even at the height at which they were standing, Roger could see that it was densely populated. Villages were scattered thickly, and the forest was restricted to patches here and there, the greater portion of the land being under cultivation.

Directly in front rose the lofty buildings and temples of a town of considerable size; seen through the clear mountain air it seemed but three or four miles away, and Roger had difficulty in believing the merchants when they assured him that it was fully twenty. This was Tepeaca. The slaves, wearied as they were, quickened in their pace, and in two hours they emerged from the mountain gorges on to the temperate plateau. Here they halted for some hours near a post-house, a courier being sent on to Tepeaca to inform the king's envoys that they had arrived thus far, and to ask whether they should proceed at noon, when the slaves had rested, or make their entry into the town in the morning.

In a little over four hours the answer was received; the merchants were directed to wait where they were until three hours after noon, then to move forward until they arrived within eight miles of the town, and then to halt for the night, and to start again at sunrise next morning. Roger was as glad as

were the slaves that he had not another fifteen miles' march before him, for the journey had been a most fatiguing one. He thought that the absolute distance traversed did not exceed thirty miles, but owing to the difficulties of the road, and the care that had to be taken in traversing it at night, even with the assistance of the torches carried by the soldiers of the caravan, it had taken them twenty hours, including occasional halts, to perform the journey. An abundance of food was brought in by the neighbouring villagers, and the merchants issued an extra supply of cocoa to the slaves; and when the march was resumed late in the afternoon the latter had completely recovered from their fatigue.

After a march of little more than two hours' duration the caravan halted for the night, and resumed its journey at day-break. The merchants had presented Roger with a mantle more highly decorated than that which he had before worn, and with some rich plumes of feathers for his head, and seeing that they wished him to make as brave a show as possible, he put on some of the gold necklaces and bracelets he had received at Tabasco. The caravan was formed up in military order, the standards of the traders being displayed at the head of the column. The porters were placed four abreast, and the soldiers who marched on either side were ordered to see that they kept their ranks.

The merchants had put on their handsomest mantles, and everything was done to show off the procession to the best. As they approached Tepeaca the road was lined with people, the news of the approach of the wonderful white man having spread rapidly. As Roger passed they bowed to the ground with the same respect that they paid to their own chiefs. He fully came up to their expectations, for not only was the whiteness of his skin and the colour of his hair wonderful to them, but he stood many inches higher than the merchants who walked by his side, for Roger had now attained his full height—although but a few months past seventeen—and stood six feet two in the thin sandals that he wore. He was as yet far from the width that he would attain in another five

or six years, but looked broad and massive as compared with the slight frames of the Mexicans.

When within a quarter of a mile of the gates of the town a procession was seen approaching from it; at its head were two nobles, whose appearance far exceeded anything Roger had hitherto seen. They wore cuirasses formed of thin plates of gold, and over these mantles of gorgeous feather-work. On the head of one was a helmet of wood fashioned to represent the head of the puma, or Mexican lion; the other wore a helmet of silver, above which was a cluster of variegated feathers sprinkled with precious stones. They wore heavy collars, bracelets, and earrings of gold and precious stones; beside them were borne their banners, richly embroidered with gold and feather-work, while behind them were a body of soldiers in close vests of quilted cotton, and a train of slaves.

The merchants bowed low as the nobles approached. The latter paused for a moment as they came near to Roger, and then saluted him by touching the ground with their hands and then carrying them to their heads. Roger did the same. In the meantime several attendants round the nobles were filling the air with incense from censers which they bore.

"The King of Tezcuco has sent us to welcome you," one of the nobles said; "he longs to see the white stranger who has arrived in our land."

"I have heard of the greatness of the king," Roger replied, "and desire to look upon him. I have come from a great distance beyond the sea to see for myself the greatness of the Anahuac kingdoms, and am glad to meet two of its great nobles."

The Mexicans were not surprised at Roger understanding their language and replying in it, for the despatches had already acquainted the king with the fact that the white stranger could converse in their language. There had been an animated debate at the royal council at Tezcuco when the news of his coming had arrived. Some were of opinion that it was an evil omen, for there was a prophecy existing among them that white strangers would come from beyond the seas

and overthrow the Aztec power; but, upon the other hand, it was pointed out that this could only refer to a large body of men, and that as this stranger came alone it was far more probable that he was either Quetzalcoatl himself or one of his descendants, and that he came in a spirit of good will. If he were a man, one man could do nothing to shake the Aztec power; if he were a god he could work evil to the whole country whether he remained on the sea-shore or advanced to the capital; and it was far better to propitiate him with gifts than to anger him with opposition.

Some slaves next brought forward some delicately wrought mats, and laid upon them the various articles they had brought. A shield, helmet, and a cuirass, all with embossed plates and ornaments of gold; a collar and bracelets of the same metal; sandals and fans; crests of variegated feathers, intermingled with gold and silk thread, sprinkled with pearls and precious stones; imitations of birds and animals in cast and wrought gold and silver, of exquisite workmanship; curtains, coverlets, and robes of cotton as fine as silk, of rich and various colours, interwoven with feather-work so finely wrought that it resembled the delicacy of painting.

Roger was astonished at the richness and variety of these goods, and as he viewed them muttered to himself: "If I were but back in Plymouth with these, my Cousin Mercy and Dorothy and Agnes would open their eyes indeed. I wish to goodness I had something to send back to the king. One of the cannon from the *Swan*, with a supply of ammunition and bullets, would have astonished him. However, as it is, I suppose that I must make the best of it."

When the goods were all displayed, Roger addressed the ambassadors, saying how great was the pleasure that the gifts afforded him. Not, he said, because he desired gold or jewels or articles of luxury, but because they were proofs of the good will of the king and of the mightiness of his power. "Will you convey my earnest thanks to him for these presents, and say that I regret deeply that I have come to his country empty-handed, and have nought to send him in return; but

that there are reasons why I could not bring aught with me from the place far across the seas from which I came? There are many strange and wonderful things there. People move across the water in floating castles as big as your temples; they ride on great animals which carry them with the speed of the wind; when they fight they use weapons which twenty men could not lift, which make a noise like thunder, and destroy their foes at two or three miles' distance. But I was not permitted to bring at present any of these wonders from the far-distant country. I wanted to come myself, and I have come; but, as I have said, I had to come alone and empty-handed. In time these wonderful things will be brought to your shores, but the time has not come yet."

The nobles listened with respectful attention. It seemed to them probable enough that a supernatural personage might convoy himself vast distances through the air, but that he could not burden himself with mortal appliances—if, indeed, such things were the work of merely mortal men.

"I could bring with me," Roger went on, "but one small specimen of the metal most used in that distant country."

Then the merchants advanced, and handed to Roger his knife, which they had purchased of the Cacique of Tabasco in exchange for two accomplished slaves, and he presented it to the nobles.

"You see it is a metal of extraordinary hardness. Swords made of it will cut through a man's head to the chin. No arrows or spears will penetrate armour made of it; it can be beaten into all shapes when hot; the weapons of which I spoke to you are constructed of it, and it is now used in the arts in manufacture and for domestic purposes, as well as for armour and weapons. So common is it that, as you see, the handle is made only of rough horn which shows you that it is such a one as is commonly used and is prized but little. It may be that such a metal is found in your country, though as yet you know it not, for in its natural state it is but a stone like others, although greater in weight; and if so, I may be permitted some day to instruct you in the methods of working it."

The nobles were greatly impressed with this speech. Quetzalcoatl had instructed the Mexicans in all the arts that they possessed, and this hint that their visitor might bestow upon them the knowledge of this new and most valuable metal, seemed a fresh proof of his relationship to the White God whose return had been so long expected and longed for. They now begged him to enter the city, and a party of their slaves took up the gifts and ranged themselves behind him. The Mexican troops fell in on either side and prevented the crowd from pressing in upon them; and then accompanied by the two nobles and followed immediately by the merchants Roger headed the procession as it again set forward.

As he entered the town Roger saw that it was vastly in advance of Tabasco. The walls were of stone, strong and massive, the streets were wide and straight, bordered by well built houses with flat roofs, upon which great numbers of people were assembled. These uttered cries of welcome as he came along and threw down wreaths of flowers. The Aztec governor, with a strong guard of soldiers, met them in a large square in the centre of the town, and in the name of the Emperor Montezuma welcomed Roger, and presented him with gifts of even greater value than those sent by the King of Tezenco, saying that his master hoped that he would pay a visit to his capital as well as to that of the neighbouring sovereign.

Roger replied suitably, and the procession then took its way to a large house that had been assigned to the visitor. Here a banquet was served in grand style, the governor and the two ambassadors alone taking their seats with him. The meal was served up on golden dishes, and *pulque* was handed round in goblets of the same metal, by white-robed slaves. Strains of music rose in the air, the performers being stationed in an adjoining apartment. The music was unlike anything Roger had ever before heard, and seemed to him to be of a plaintive nature. With the exception of the fruits the dishes served were all strange to him, and he was unable even to guess at their nature. Among them was a large bird, which Roger judged to be either a swan or a peacock, but which he was

informed was a turkey, a bird common in the country, but of which he had never before heard.

There were other sorts of game, and all these were prepared with delicate sauces and seasonings. There were a large number of various confections and pastry, and a great variety of vegetables and fruits. Under the dishes of meats small fires of charcoal were burning in order to keep them hot. The table was ornamented with vases of silver and gold of delicate workmanship, and the confections were eaten with spoons made of gold or silver or of tortoise-shell. Several varieties of *pulque*, flavoured with sweets and acids, were handed, as also chocolate flavoured with vanilla and other spices.

When the viands were removed slaves brought round, as they had done before the meal began, basins of water and soft cotton towels, and each of those present washed his hands and face. Then a surprise even greater than those which had preceded it awaited Roger. Two attendants brought round waiters, upon one of which was placed a pile of a substance which looked to Roger as if it were the leaves of some vegetable broken into small pieces, and also a gold box containing a brown dust. On the other tray were placed a variety of instruments of whose use Roger was ignorant. They were small tubes inserted into bowls of gold or silver, and in addition to these were some things that looked like yellowish-brown sticks of two or three inches in length, with tubes into which they fitted.

These trays were first handed to Roger, who, after examining their contents, turned to the noble next to him and said: "I know not what these may be or how they are used. They are not in use in the country from which I come."

The noble looked surprised. "It is *yell*," he said, "and is good for soothing the nerves and preparing for the *siesta*, besides being very pleasant. All these are made from the same leaf," and he touched the short sticks, the heap of broken leaves and the powder. "This powder we apply to the nose," and he and his companions took a pinch from the box and thrust it into their nostrils. Roger followed their example,

but a pungent odour brought the tears into his eyes, and in another moment he was seized with a violent fit of sneezing, from which he was some time before he recovered.

"You will get over this in time," the noble said gravely, but with a slight smile; "this effect is only experienced when the herb is first used."

Much as Roger had been astonished by the effect of the powder, he was still more surprised at the use to which the broken leaf and the little sticks were put. Two of the Mexicans filled the small bowls with the leaf, while the other took one of the tubes holding a small stick. An attendant then approached with a small piece of wood on fire; this was applied first to the stick and then to the small bowls, and to Roger's stupefaction great clouds of smoke at once issued from the mouths of the three Mexicans. Had it not been that, from the tranquil expression of their faces, he saw that this was the regular course of events, he would have thought that some accident had occurred, and that the Mexicans had in some mysterious way taken fire in the interior. He remained silent for a minute or two, and then asked: "Do you like it? is it really pleasant to you?"

"It is, indeed," the governor said. "This herb is largely used; its effect is to produce a feeling of repose and contentment. You will get to like it in time."

"Possibly I may," Roger replied; "although at present that hardly seems probable."

The music now struck up a more lively air. Presently a number of young men and women, who had been feasting in another apartment, came in and performed several graceful dances to the accompaniment of the music; singing, as they did so, a sort of chant, which reminded Roger of those he had so often heard in the churches at home.

When all was over the ambassadors withdrew, saying that doubtless their guests would wish to enjoy a *siesta* during the heat of the day. Some slaves led the way into another apartment in which was a couch heaped with soft rugs, and here Roger threw himself down.

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ROGER RECEIVES A LESS FORMAL SALUTE FROM HIS COUSINS.

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"Was there ever an English boy in so strange a strait as mine?" he said to himself. "What an extraordinary people! Gold seems as plentiful with them as common pottery with us; and as to the magnificence of their dresses, I verily believe that the court of King Harry would make but a poor show beside them. If I could land at Plymouth to-morrow, with all the presents I have received to-day, I should be a rich man. Here they are valueless. I received presents at first at Tabasco, and yet had I remained there a month longer I should have been sacrificed to those cruel gods of theirs. These presents mean really nothing to me; they seem magnificent, but gold is so common here that it is no more than if at home one presented a man with necklaces of glass, and some woollen cloths. It is a mark of civility, but that is all. When I get there, the priest will be enquiring into my religion, and when they see that I pay no honour to their gods they will be sure to raise a cry against me.

"Malinche was telling me that every year some special prisoner is chosen for sacrifice, and is treated with great honour and has every luxury until the time comes, and then they put him to death. Brutes! I have no doubt they will consider that from my very rarity I shall make a specially acceptable sacrifice. I wish I was back on the Hoe again. Cousin Diggory, and Mistress Merey, and the girls little think into what a horrible fix I have fallen—alone among a strange people, who breathe smoke out of their mouths, and load me with rich presents one day, and may kill me on the next. Well, when the day comes I shall try not to disgrace my country and religion and colour; but it is very hard being all alone here. If I had but two or three of my companions of the Swan with me I should feel that I could face whatever came; but it is hard to stand quite alone, and I am only a boy. Still they shall find that I can strike a rough blow or two before I die. They shall not find that it is a lamb that they are going to sacrifice, but a Devonshire lad with such bone and muscle as one gets from a life on the sea.

"It is strange that these people should be so cruel, they

seem so mild and so gentle; and yet Malinche says they sacrifice tens of thousands of captives every year to their gods. They never kill in battle if they can avoid it, striving only to take their enemies prisoners for this horrible service. I must try if I can to make friends among them. The old Cacique of Tabasco stood by me well, and it may be that here I may find some like him; but it will need a powerful protector indeed to stand against the priests, who, Malinche says, are far more powerful here than in Tabasco."

Three hours later an attendant came in, and said that the governor invited his guest to walk with him through the town, and survey the temples and other edifices. "Now for it," Roger said, clenching his fist. "Now, Roger Hawkshaw, you have got to show yourself a true man, whatever comes of it." He fastened the sword, which was one of the weapons with which he had been presented, to his girdle, and then went out into the great hall from which all the other apartments opened. The governor and the two nobles from Tezcuco were awaiting him. Upon sallying out, Roger found that the streets were as crowded as when he entered. He was received with a long quavering cry of welcome by the women, and by a deeper hum of applause by the men. All bent to the ground before him and his companions, before whom a party of soldiers moved to clear the way.

"Now, we will go first to the Great Temple," the governor said. "It is but small in comparison with those of the great cities of the valley, but it is a very holy shrine, and numbers come from all the cities round to pay their devotion there on the days of festival. There are forty temples in the town, on all of which fire burns night and day; but this is the largest and holiest of them."

After passing through several streets, Roger saw a great hill rising in front of him. Whether it was the work of man, or had a natural hill for its foundation, he knew not. It was four-sided and pyramidal in form. There were terraces rising one above the other, supported by stone walls; steps at the angles led from one terrace to another, but these were so

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placed that anyone mounting had to pass right along the terrace round the pyramid, before he arrived at the steps leading to that above. The top of the pyramid seemed to be cut off, leaving an area of, as far as he could judge, some fifty feet square. Smoke ascended from the summit, where, as Malinche had told him, fire always burns before the altar in its centre. Just before reaching the foot of the pyramid the governor pointed to a building of considerable size.

"Here you will see, he said, leading Roger towards a great gateway, "how well the god has been honoured."

As he neared the gateway Roger saw that the building was well-nigh filled with an immense pile, carefully built up of what at first appeared to him cannon balls, only of larger size than any he had seen piled in the batteries of Plymouth, and of a white colour. Then the thought struck him they were great turnips or some such root, which might be held sacred to the god, but as he entered the building the truth flashed across him, the great pile was composed entirely of human skulls. Roger had made up his mind that although he would not give way in the slightest in the matter of his faith, he would yet abstain from shocking the religious feeling of the natives. After the first involuntary start at the discovery he silenced his feelings and asked how many skulls there were in the heap. He could not, however, understand the reply, as he had not yet mastered the Aztec method of enumeration, which was a very complicated one. Roger walked along one side of the pile, counted the number of skulls in a line, and the number of rows, and then tried to reckon how many skulls there were.

Roger was not quick at figures, although his father had tried hard to teach him to calculate rapidly, as it was necessary for one who traded and bought and sold goods of all descriptions to be able to keep his own figures, or he would otherwise be forced always to carry a supercargo, as was indeed the custom in almost all trading ships, for there were few masters who could read and write, far less keep accounts. However, as he found there were a hundred skulls in each line, and ten rows,

and as the heap was nearly square it was not a difficult task to arrive at the conclusion that there must be a hundred thousand skulls in the pile.

This seemed to him beyond belief, and yet he could arrive at no other conclusion. If a hundred thousand victims had been offered up in one temple of this comparatively small city, what must be the total of men killed throughout the country? The pile had, no doubt, been a long time in growing, perhaps a hundred years; but even then it would give a thousand victims yearly in this one temple. Although it seemed well-nigh impossible to Roger, it was yet by no means excessive, for according to the accounts of all historians, Mexican and Spanish, the number of victims slain annually on the altars of Mexico amounted to from twenty-five to fifty thousand.

"The god has good reason to be pleased?" the Aztec ambassador, who was watching Roger's face closely, remarked.

"If he is fond of blood and sacrifices, he should indeed be pleased," Roger said quietly; "but all gods do not love slaughter. Quetzalcoatl, your god of the air, he who loved men and taught them what they know—such a god would abhor sacrifices of blood. Offerings of fruit and flowers, which he taught men to grow, of the arts in which he instructed them, would be vastly more pleasing to him than human victims." Roger spoke in a tone of authority, as if he were sure of what he stated. "When the white god left your shores there were no human sacrifices offered to the gods—" this fact Roger had learnt from Malinche, who had told him that the custom had been introduced in comparatively late years; she said ten generations, which he supposed would mean about two hundred years—"and such a custom would be abhorrent to him."

The Aztec governor looked very grave. It was to the god of war that these sacrifices were offered, but the idea that the kindly white god, who stood next to him in public estimation, might not only object to be so worshipped himself, but might object altogether to human sacrifices being offered, was unpleasant to him; and yet this white stranger clearly spoke as if he were acquainted with the mind of Quetzalcoatl. The

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Tezucan envoys, on the other hand, looked pleased. Tezucoco had maintained for a long time a milder form of worship, her people were more gentle than the Aztecs; and had only reluctantly, and in part, adopted the terrible rites of their formidable neighbours.

"Will you ascend the temple?" the governor asked.

"No," Roger said firmly, "I say not aught against the god of battles, let those who will make offerings to him. The God of the Air," and Roger raised his hand towards the sky, "loves flowers and fruit and peace and good will. When He came down to earth He preached peace, and would have had all men as brothers; and I who follow Him will not bow down at altars where human beings have been sacrificed."

The Mexican naturally thought that Roger was speaking of Quetzalcoatl, and this strange knowledge he possessed of the god and his ways and wishes, struck him with deep awe. Without making any further attempt to induce him to ascend the *teocalli*, which was the name they gave to their pyramidal temples, the governor led the way back to the palace.

The next morning Roger started with the Tezucan envoys on his journey. They informed him on the way that the Aztec governor had on the previous evening despatched an officer of high rank to Mexico, to give the emperor the full details of the conversation and sayings of the strange visitor: for the despatches were available only for sending news of facts and occurrences, but could not be used as mediums for conveying thought. "Montezuma is mild and gentle in his disposition, and quite unlike his two predecessors, who were mighty warriors; and doubtless in his heart he will welcome the words you said yesterday concerning Quetzalcoatl. But he is swayed wholly by the priests, and such sentiments will not be agreeable to them, for sacrifices are for ever going on at the *teocalli*. At the dedication of the great temple for Huitzilopotchli just thirty years ago, seventy thousand captives were put to death."

"They must have been miserable creatures," Roger said indignantly, "to have submitted tamely to such a fate; they

might at least have rushed upon their guards, however numerous, and died fighting."

Rogersaid little more during that day's journey. The admiration he had at first felt for the arts and civilization of these people had been succeeded by a feeling of abhorrence. He had heard from Malinche that all victims sacrificed to the gods, were afterwards cooked and eaten, and although he had scarcely believed the girl in spite of her solemn assurances, he could now, after seeing the vast pile of human skulls, quite believe that it was true.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT TEZCUCO.

IN each city through which they passed, and several of these were of vastly greater size and importance than Tepeaca, Roger was received with the same welcome and rejoicings that had greeted him there. The houses were decorated with flowers and garlands, dense crowds lined the streets, processions came out to meet him; banquets were given in his honour, and everything seemed gay and joyous. But Roger was low and depressed, to him the whole thing appeared a mockery; he seemed to see blood everywhere, and the fact that, as he learned from the casual remark of one of the envoys, numbers of victims were offered upon the altars on the evening before his arrival at each town, in order to please the gods and bring about favourable omens, added to his depression, and he thought that he had better a thousand times have been drowned with his father and friends than be the cause of men being thus put to death.

It was true that, as he was told, these captives were reserved for this purpose, and had they not been slain on that night might have been sacrificed on the next, but this was a small consolation, it seemed to him that above the joyful cries of greeting he could hear the screams of agony of the victims, and to such

a pitch was he wrought up, that had he seen any whom he could have recognized as priests, he would have fallen upon them with his sword. But the priests held aloof from the gatherings, they knew not as yet how their chiefs would regard this stranger, and it was not their policy to join in welcoming one who might afterwards be denounced and sacrificed as an enemy of their religion, nor upon the other hand would they commit themselves to hostility to one who might be held to be a god.

From the summits of the *teocallis* they looked down upon the great gatherings, angry that, instead of as usual figuring in the chief places in the procession, they were forced to stand aloof. As in Egypt, the Aztec priests embraced within their order all the science and learning of the nation, they were skilled in the sciences of astrology and divination, and were divided into numerous ranks and classes. Those best instructed in music took the management of the choirs, others arranged the festivals conformably to the calendar, some superintended the education of the young of both sexes, others had charge of the hieroglyphic paintings and records and of the oral traditions, while the rites of sacrifice were practised by the chief dignitaries of the order. They were each devoted to the service of some particular deity, and had quarters provided within the spacious precincts of his temple.

Here a certain number were always on duty, and men living there practised the stern severity of conventual discipline. Thrice during the day, and once at night, they were called to prayers; they mortified the flesh by fasting and cruel penance, drawing blood from their bodies by flagellation or by piercing themselves with the thorns of the aloe. When their turn of duty was over, they resided with their wives and families outside the temples. The great cities were divided into districts, placed under the charge of a sort of parochial clergy. These administered the rites of baptism, confession, and absolution, each of which strongly resembled that of the Christian religion.

In baptism the lips and bosom of the infant were sprinkled

with water, and the Lord was implored to permit the holy drops to wash away the sin that was given to it before the foundation of the world, so that the child might be born anew. The secrets of confession were held inviolable, and penances were laid upon the penitents. There was one peculiarity in the Aztec ceremony of confession, namely, that the repetition of an offence once atoned for was deemed inexpiable, and confession was therefore made but once in a man's life, and generally deferred until a late period of it.

One of the most important duties of the priesthood was that of education, to which certain buildings were appropriated within the enclosure of the principal temple of each city. Here the youth of both sexes of the middle and higher classes were placed when very young; the girls being entrusted to the care of priestesses, for women exercised all sacerdotal functions except those of sacrifice. In these institutions the boys were drilled in monastic discipline; they decorated the shrines of the gods with flowers, fed the sacred fires, and took part in the religious chants and festivals; those in the higher schools were initiated in the traditionary law, the mysteries of hieroglyphics, the principles of government, and in astronomical and natural science. The girls were instructed in all feminine employments, especially in weaving and embroidery. The discipline, both in male and female schools, was stern and rigid. The temples were supported by the revenue from lands bestowed upon them by successive princes. These were managed by the priests, who were considered as excellent masters, treating their tenants with liberality and indulgence. Besides this they were entitled to the firstfruits of all produce, and were constantly receiving rich offerings from the pious. The surplus beyond what was required for the support of the priests was distributed in alms among the poor: charity being strongly prescribed by the moral code of the nation.

Thus the Aztec religion was a strange mixture of good and evil. The moral discipline enforced by it was excellent. Many of its precepts resembled very closely those of Christianity, and yet the whole was contaminated by the wholesale sacrifices.

It is supposed that this dual religion was the result of the mixture of two peoples, the mild and gentle tenets of the Toltecs being adopted by the fierce Aztec invaders, who added to them their own superstitious and bloody rites. All this, however, was unknown to Roger at the time; he saw the dark side of their religion only, and was ignorant that there underlay it a system which, in point of morality, love of order and method, and a broad charity, was in no way inferior to that practised among Christian nations.

For some reason, of which Roger was ignorant—but which was doubtless in order to avoid the delays occasioned by stoppages at large towns, and to push on the faster towards the capital, where the king and his counsellors were impatient to behold the white stranger—a *détour* was made. The towns of Puebla and Cholula were avoided, and the party pushed on rapidly across the plateau-land they were now ascending, where the air was again keen and piercing. The road passed between two of the highest mountains in the North American continent—the great volcano Popocatepetl, meaning “the hill that smokes,” and Iztaccihuatl, or “the white woman,” so called from the bright robe of snow which extended far down its sides. The lower part of these mountains was covered with dense forests, above which rock, lava, and ashes extended to the summit of the crater of the volcano.

At night the party sheltered in one of the stone buildings, erected by government at intervals along the road, for the accommodation of travellers and couriers. Pushing on the next morning, they came upon a view which caused an exclamation of surprise and delight to burst from Roger. At their feet lay the valley of Mexico with its lakes glistening in the sunshine, its cultivated plains, and numerous cities and villages. Stretching away from the point at which he was standing, were forests of oak, sycamore, and cedar; beyond, fields of yellow maize and aloe intermingled with orchards and bright patches of many colours. These were flowers, which were grown on a very large scale, as they were used in vast quantities in the religious festivals and almost universally worn by the women.

In the centre of the valley lay the great lakes, their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets. Rising from an island in the centre of the largest of these, was the city of Mexico; its great buildings and lofty *teocallis* being seen clearly through the dry atmosphere. The envoys first pointed out the capital to Roger, and then another great city some distance to the right, as being Tezcuco. Beyond the lakes, a barrier of dark hills rose, forming a suitable background to the lovely prospect.

Upon the road Roger learned much from the Tezcucan envoys of the character of the king of their country, and of the Emperor Montezuma. The grandfather of the present king had been the greatest and most powerful of the Tezcucan princes. In his youth he had gone through a series of strange adventures. Tezcuco had been captured, the people subjugated by the Tepanecs, and the king killed when the young prince was but fifteen years old. The boy himself was thrown into a dungeon, but escaped and fled to Mexico, and on the intercession of the king of that city was allowed to return, and to live for eight years quietly in a palace belonging to the family. When the Tepanec usurper died, his son Maxtla, who succeeded him, determined to kill the rightful heir to the throne, but being warned in time Nezahualcoyotl escaped, and for a long time wandered about the country, hotly pursued by his enemies, who were many times on the edge of capturing him, but he was always sheltered by the peasantry. At last the neighbouring powers, fearing the aggression of the Tepanecs, united and routed them. Maxtla was put to death, and the lawful prince placed upon the throne. He showed great magnanimity, granting a general amnesty, and then set about to remodel the government.

Three departments were formed: the Council of War, the Council of Finance, and the Council of Justice; and in each of these bodies a certain number of citizens were allowed to have seats with the nobles and state officers. The highest body was composed of fourteen members, all belonging to the highest orders of nobles; this was called the Council of State, which aided

the king in the despatch of business, and advised him in all matters of importance; its members had seats provided for them at the royal table. Lastly, there was a tribunal known as the Council of Music; this was composed of the best instructed persons in the country, without regard of rank, and was devoted to the encouragement of all branches of science and art. All works on these subjects had to be submitted to them before they could be made public. They had the supervision of all the productions of art and the more delicate fabrics; they decided on the qualifications of the teachers of the various branches of science, enquired into the proper performance of their duties, and instituted examinations of the pupils. The Council gave prizes for historical composition and poems treating of moral or traditional topics. It was, in fact, at once a board of education, and a council of science and art. The kings of the three allied states had seats upon it, and deliberated with the other members on the adjudication of the prizes.

Thus Tezucoco became the centre of the education, science, and art of Anahuac, and was at this time the head of the three allied kingdoms. Nezahualcoyotl greatly encouraged agriculture as well as all the productive arts. The royal palace and the edifices of the nobles were magnificent buildings, and were upon an enormous scale, the Spaniards acknowledging that they surpassed any buildings in their own country. Not satisfied with receiving the reports of his numerous officers, the monarch went frequently in disguise among his people, listening to their complaints, and severely punishing wrongdoers. Being filled with deep religious feeling, he openly confessed his faith in a God far greater than the idols of wood and stone worshipped by his subjects, and built a great temple which he dedicated to the Unknown God.

After fifty years' reign this great monarch died, and was succeeded by his son Nezahualpilli, who resembled his father in his tastes, encouraging learning, especially astronomical studies, and building magnificent public edifices. He was severe in his morals and stern in the execution of justice. In his youth he had been devoted to war, and had extended

the dominion of Tezcuco, but he afterwards became indolent and spent much of his time in retirement. His Mexican rival took advantage of this, for as the rule of Tezcuco became relaxed distant provinces revolted, the discipline of the army became shakon, and Montezuma, partly by force, partly by fraud, possessed himself of a considerable portion of its dominions and assumed the title hitherto held by the Tezcucan princes of "Emperor."

These misfortunes pressed heavily on the spirits of the king, and their effect was increased by certain gloomy prognostics of a great calamity which was shortly to overwhelm the country. His health rapidly gave way; he had died but two years before; and had been succeeded by his son Cacama, the present king, a young prince who was two-and-twenty years old when he ascended the throne after a sanguinary war with an ambitious younger brother. In Tezcuco, as in Mexico, the office of king was elective and not hereditary. It was, indeed, confined to the royal family, but the elective council, composed of the great nobles and of the kings of the other two confederate monarchies, selected the member of that family whom they considered best qualified to rule.

Roger was greatly impressed with these accounts of the government of this strange country. It appeared to him that art and learning were there held of much higher account than they were in England; and it seemed more strange to him than ever that a people so enlightened could be guilty of such wholesale human sacrifices as those of which he had heard, and had indeed seen proof, still more that they could absolutely feast upon the flesh of these victims of their cruel superstitions.

Descending into the valley the party avoided as before the numerous cities in the plain. The Tezcucans told him that they did so simply because they were anxious to arrive as soon as possible at the capital; but as Roger learnt from them that the sway of Montezuma was paramount in this part of the valley, he thought it probable that they feared the Aztecs might take him from their hands and send him direct to the emperor.

After a long march, across a richly cultivated country, they approached the town of Tezcuco just as evening was closing in. A messenger had gone on ahead to announce the exact hour at which they would arrive, and a party of soldiers were stationed a short distance outside the town to escort them through the city to the royal palace. They formed up on either side of the party when they arrived, and without a pause the caravan kept on its way. Roger had been astonished at the magnificence of the houses of the wealthy, scattered for a long distance round the city, and at the extraordinary beauty of the gardens with their shady groves, their bright flowers, their fishponds and fountains; but the splendour of the buildings of the capital surpassed anything he had before beheld.

Not even in Genoa or Cadiz were there such stately buildings, while those of London were insignificant in comparison. The crowd in the streets were quiet and orderly, and although they looked with curiosity and interest on the white stranger, of whose coming they had heard, evinced none of the enthusiasm with which he had been greeted at Tepeaca. This was natural enough: the inhabitants of a capital being accustomed to splendid fêtes and festivals are less easily moved than those of a small provincial town by any unaccustomed events, and are more restrained in the expression of their feelings. The dresses of the people were greatly superior to those he had seen hitherto; they wore over their shoulders a cloak made of cottons of different degrees of fineness, according to the condition of the wearer. These and the ample sashes worn round the loins were wrought in rich and elegant figures, and edged with a deep fringe or tassels.

The women went about as freely as the men; instead of the cloaks, they wore mantles of fur or gorgeous feather-work. Beneath these were several skirts or petticoats of different lengths, with highly ornamented borders. Sometimes loose flowing robes were worn over these, reaching to the ankles—those of the upper classes being of very fine textures and prettily embroidered. Some of the women wore veils made of fine thread of the aloe, or that spun from the hair of rabbits

and other animals. Others had their faces entirely exposed, their dark tresses falling luxuriantly over their shoulders. These, Roger learned afterwards, were Aztecs, the rest of the women of Anahuac mostly wearing the veil, which was, however, extremely thin, and scarcely concealed the features.

The guards ahead with difficulty cleared the way through the crowd, until they at last arrived at the king's palace, a building of extraordinary splendour.

A number of nobles in gorgeous attire received the party at the entrance, and passing along a stately corridor they entered a vast hall. A cornice of carved stonework covered with thin plates of gold ran round the walls, and from this dropped hangings of the most delicately embroidered stuffs. The roof was of carved cedar, the floor a mosaic of stone of different colours, so delicately fitted together that they seemed one. At the farther end of the hall upon a raised dais was a throne. Upon this the young king was sitting, while a number of his counsellors and nobles, together with several princesses and ladies of the court, were gathered around him.

When Roger approached, he bowed low, saluting in Mexican fashion. The king rose as he approached, looking with lively curiosity and interest at the strange visitor of whom he had already received so many reports.

Roger, on his part, regarded the king with no less interest. He saw before him a young man of three or four and twenty, with a bright intelligent face. His figure showed signs of considerable strength as well as activity, and there was a certain martial air in his carriage that spoke of the soldier rather than of the king. The nobles had endeavoured to impress upon Roger the necessity for him to salute the king by prostrating himself on the ground as they themselves did. But Roger had refused to comply with their request. "King Hal himself would not expect me to go before him like a worm if he gave me audience," he said to himself; "and I will not demean myself, as an Englishman, to bow as a slave before any other monarch. Besides, to do so would be to acknowledge that I was his humble subject, and would at once show that

I have no pretension whatever to be the superior creature they seem to consider me. I will salute him as his nobles saluted me—paying due deference to his rank, and no more."

The king himself did not seem displeased at Roger's breach of the usual etiquette. He looked with admiration at the tall figure of this strange white man, and at the frank and honest expression of his pleasant face, his blue eyes, and sunny hair.

"Whoever he may be, he comes not as an enemy," he said in a low voice to his sister, who was standing next to him. "There is neither deceit nor treachery in that face." Then he said aloud to Roger:—

"You are welcome, white stranger. We rejoice to see you in our courts. We have heard wonderful stories concerning you, and about the people in the distant lands from which you come, and shall gladly hear them from your lips, for we are told that you speak our tongue."

"I thank you, King Cacama, and I am glad, indeed, that it is my good fortune to behold so great and magnificent a king. I have come, as you have heard, from a far country, towards the rising sun; so far, that it takes many months to traverse the sea which divides it from you; but had the distance been far greater than it is, I should have been more than repaid for the journey by the sight of you, and of this great city over which you rule."

"And is it true that your people move about the sea in floating castles, and that they fight with weapons that make a noise like thunder, and can batter down walls at a distance of two miles?"

"They can kill men at more than that distance, Sire; but for battering down walls they are used at shorter distances. The ships are, as you say, floating castles, and will carry hundreds of men with provisions and stores for many months, besides merchandize and goods. These castles are armed with weapons such as you speak of, some of them carrying twenty or more, besides which each man carries a weapon of the same kind, but small and light in make, so that it can be carried on the shoulders. These weapons also make a great noise, though

not comparable with that of the large pieces which are called cannon."

"And they have animals on which they sit, and which carry them at a speed far greater than that at which a man can run?"

"That is so, Sire."

"Of what colour are they, and of what form?"

"They are all colours: some are black, and some white, others brown, or grey, or roan, or bay."

This answer seemed to surprise the king more than any other he had heard. All the beasts and birds with which he was acquainted were of the particular colour which appertained to their species, and that the animals of any one kind should thus differ in so extraordinary degree from each other struck him as remarkable indeed. Roger had always been fond of sketching, and had often whiled away dull hours on board ship, with pencil and paint-brush, and his cousins at home had quite a collection of sketches that he made for them in foreign parts. He now said:—

"If your Majesty will order that gentleman who is at present taking my likeness, to hand me a sheet of paper and his brushes, I will endeavour to draw for your Majesty an outline of the animal I speak of, and which we call a horse."

At the king's order the scribe at once handed the necessary materials to Roger, who in three or four minutes dashed off a spirited sketch of a horse with a rider upon his back. The king was greatly struck with the representation. The Aztecs possessed the art of copying objects with a fair amount of accuracy, but the figures were stiff and wooden, without the slightest life or animation. To the king, then, this little sketch appeared almost supernatural. Here was before him an animal which looked alive, as if already in movement. He passed it to those next to him and continued the conversation:—

"And the men fight on the backs of those animals?"

"The nobles and a certain portion of the troops fight on horseback, the rest of the army on foot."

"And are not these animals frightened at the terrible noises made by the weapons you speak of?"

"They speedily become accustomed to them, your Majesty, just as men do; and will carry their rider into the midst of the enemy, however great the noise. Some other time I will draw for your Majesty a representation of one of our knights or captains, charging in full armour, which is as you have perhaps heard, made of a metal that is not known here."

"And these weapons that you speak of are made of the same metal?"

"They are mostly made of that metal, Sire, though sometimes they are made of a metal which we call brass, which is a compound of copper, and of another metal called tin, which adds greatly to its strength and hardness."

"But how do they work? What machinery can be used to hurl a missile at so vast a distance?"

"There is no machinery, Sire; the weapon is a hollow tube of vast strength, closed at one end, with only a small hole left there by which fire can be applied; a black powder, composed of various substances, is placed in the tube and pressed up to the end, a wad of cotton or other material being forced down upon it; a large ball made of this metal, which is called iron, and almost the same diameter as the tube, is pushed down upon the wad; and the weapon is pointed at the enemy, or at the wall to be knocked down. Then fire is applied to the small hole, the powder at once explodes with a noise like thunder; and the ball is sent through the air with so great a speed that the eye cannot follow its flight, and all that it strikes goes down before it."

"Even one of these captains on his horse?" the king asked.

"Fifty of them, Sire, were they ranged up in line one behind the other."

"Will you be able to teach us to make such weapons?"

"Your Majesty, I have had a share in the using of these weapons, but not in the making of them; and they require great skill in their manufacture. I know not whether ironstone exists in this country, and were it found it would require

a long experiment and great knowledge to manufacture a cannon from it. As to the powder, it is composed of three ingredients,—one is charcoal, which can be obtained wherever trees grow; another is called by us saltpetre; and the third, sulphur; but I cannot say whether either is found in this land. Nor, your Majesty, do I think that such knowledge, could I impart it, would be a blessing to the land; on the contrary, the battles would be far more terrible and bloody than they now are. Vast numbers would be slain, and valour and bravery would avail but little against these terrible missiles."

"No," the king said, thoughtfully: "you would take few prisoners if you fought with such weapons as these. You take some prisoners, I suppose?"

"Yes, your Majesty; we always take as prisoners those who ask for mercy."

"And what do you do with them?"

"We treat them honourably and well, as is befitting men who have fought bravely. We exchange them for men of our own side who have been taken prisoners by the enemy, or if they are knights or nobles they pay a ransom according to their rank to their captor, and so return home."

"That is good," the young king said with animation; "though it differs altogether from our usages; but, then, how are their altars of the gods to be served?"

"I believe," Roger said, "that your Majesty's grandfather erected a temple here to the Unknown God. It is the Unknown God—unknown to you, but known to us—that the white peoples across the sea worship. He is a good and gentle and loving God, and would abhor sacrifices of blood."

The king did not reply for a minute. The introduction of human sacrifices was a comparatively recent innovation in Tezcuco, and although the Aztecs had lately almost forced their own hideous rites upon their neighbours, there were many who were still at heart opposed to them. He turned the subject by saying: "There will be much for you to tell me when we have leisure; at present the banquet waits."

The eighteen months that had elapsed since the wreck of

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the *Swan* had prepared Roger for taking part in such scenes as those in which he was at present placed. From living so long among natives, and in native costume, he had acquired something of their manner, which, unless under strong excitement, was quiet and dignified. He had done this the more because whenever he went out all eyes had been upon him, and he had felt that it was necessary, so far as he could, to support the mysterious reputation he possessed. He had lost alike the sailor walk and carriage, the careless gaiety of a boy, and the roughness of one brought up to life at sea. He himself was only half-conscious of this transformation, but to one who had seen him last when he sailed from Plymouth it would have appeared absolutely marvellous.

Undoubtedly it impressed both the king and his nobles most favourably; and as the party followed the king and Roger to the banqueting-hall, there was a chorus of approval of the manners, bearing, and appearance of the white stranger. The banquet was similar, but on a vastly greater scale, to that of which Roger had partaken at Tepeaca.

Mexico contained within comparatively narrow limits extreme diversities of climate, and by means of the swift couriers the kings and nobles could place upon their tables the tropical fruits and vegetables from the zone of the sea, the temperate fruits from the lofty plateau-land, and the products of the rich and highly cultivated valley of the capital.

The twenty counsellors sat down at table with the king, other tables were spread at which the principal nobles feasted, while the king's wife and sister and other ladies dined in the same hall, but had tables apart. The king abstained from asking questions of Roger about his country during the meal, but conversed with him concerning his journey, and his impressions of the country; and enquired particularly whether he was perfectly satisfied with the treatment he had received from the merchants. Roger assured him that nobody could have been kinder or more courteous than they had been, and that he hoped his Majesty would express his satisfaction at their conduct.

"That has already been done," the king said; "the reports of my envoys were sufficient for that. They have been raised in rank, have received permission to carry specially decorated banners, with other privileges and immunities."

After dinner was over, the king, without waiting as usual for the smoking and entertainments of musicians, dancers, and acrobats rose, saying to Roger: "I am too anxious to talk with you to take pleasure in these amusements; come with me now."

He led the way to the entrance to the private apartments; these were enclosed by magnificent hangings, which were drawn aside by two attendants, as he approached them. The walls were here entirely hidden by hangings, and the floor covered with a thick carpeting of richly dyed cotton stuff; the air was heavy with odours of perfumes. The king led the way to an apartment of considerable size, although small in comparison to the two great halls they had left. Couches of quilted mats, covered with silken embroidery, extended round the room, and a general air of comfort as well as luxury pervaded it.

From the open windows a view extended over a lovely garden below, and then across the lake, to the walls and temples of Mexico, shining in the moonlight and dotted with innumerable spots of fire on the summits of the *teocallis*. The room itself was lighted with open lamps, in which burned cotton wicks embedded in wax. Cacama clapped his hands, and a young noble in attendance entered. The king bade him summon six of his counsellors, and tell the queen and the princess that he awaited them.

In a short time these entered. The pomp and ceremony of royalty were, to a considerable extent, laid aside in Tezcuco in the interior of the palace—the custom there differing much from that which prevailed at the court of Montezuma, where the emperor never relaxed in the slightest in exacting the lowliest and most profound homage from all who approached him.

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CHAPTER IX.

LIFE IN A PALACE.

"NOW," the young king exclaimed joyously, as soon as the party he had invited had assembled, and the silk hangings at the entrance of the door had been closed; "Now we can talk at our ease. In the first place what can I call you?"

"My name is Roger Hawkshaw, your Majesty." The king repeated the name. "It is two words," Roger said. "With us, people have two names—the one which is common to all the family, the other which is given particularly to each person. The name of my family is Hawkshaw, my own name is Roger. Your Majesty can call me by either name, or by both."

Long names were common in Mexico, and Roger Hawkshaw seemed by no means long to the king.

"Roger Hawkshaw shall be your name in public," he said. "It has a strange grand sound, and will impress the people; but I will call you Roger. This is my queen and first wife, Maclutha; this is my sister, Amenche; these are two of my oldest and ablest counsellors, both are great nobles, and have led the armies of my father to victory; these four young men are, as you see, my friends—they are the sons of four of my chief nobles, and have been brought up with me since we were children. Now tell us more about yourself and your people."

The whole party took their seats upon the couches, half sitting, half reclining. Attendants brought in cocoa of many different flavours, confections, and tobacco.

Roger took the cocoa, but refused the tobacco. "We do not know this herb in our country," he said.

"That is a grave misfortune for you," the king remarked. "It is known and used by all peoples that we know of here; it was used by the people we found here, when we came from the far north, and all the tribes there used it also. First tell me what induced you to make this long journey across the sea."

Roger had been expecting this question, and as he had already determined that he would in all matters adhere to the truth, he did not hesitate in his reply.

"Your Majesty will understand that all the white peoples who dwell on the borders of the sea journey much in ships, which is the name we give to the floating castles. We do trade with many peoples; for example, there is far to the south of us a great land wholly inhabited by people who are quite black."

A general exclamation of astonishment broke from the party.

"They must be frightful!" the young queen exclaimed.

"They are very ugly," Roger said, "with very wide mouths and very thick lips, and flat noses; and instead of having long soft hair, they have only a short curly sort of black wool on the top of their heads."

"Have you seen them yourself?" asked Cacama, rather gravely.

"I have seen some of them, Sire," Roger replied. "I was in a ship that was attacked by others manned by a people who live on the northern coast of this land, and who are themselves not black but yellow; and they had with them several of these people of whom I speak, who were frightful in their ugliness, but who, to do them justice, fought bravely, though we managed at last to beat them off. I pray your Majesty not to doubt any facts that I may tell you, for in my country it is considered disgraceful to lie; and however extraordinary some of the things I may say may appear to you, I can assure you that they will all be absolutely true. They may seem to you hard to believe, but you must remember that things which are strange to us always seem wonderful; my own countrymen, for example, would find it hard to believe that there could be a people who took delight in drawing in the smoke of a burning vegetable and puffing it out again."

"I will not doubt what you say in future," Cacama said. "Now continue what you were telling us."

"The white people are divided into nations, as are your people on this side of the water. Some, however, are much more

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powerful than others. While in times of peace all the ports of different countries are open to the ships of the others, there are two countries that claim the right over great seas, although as yet untravelled and unknown."

"But how can they claim such a right as that?" one of the two chief counsellors asked.

"Partly by the right that they have been the first to try to make discoveries in those seas; secondly, because one of these countries is the strongest at the present time; and thirdly, because they have been confirmed in their claim by the pope, who is the chief priest of the religion that is held in common among all white people. To the Spaniards was assigned that vast space of water lying towards the setting sun."

"You do not belong to that nation?"

"No. My country is called England. It is a great island divided into two kingdoms, of which ours is the larger."

"Are your people great fighters?"

"Yes. We have fought many obstinate wars with the nation lying on the mainland opposite to us, and our men have beaten theirs when they have outnumbered us many-fold; but at present we are at peace. We found that while we could beat them in battle, we could not continue to hold a country that lay separated from us by the sea."

"And you are friends with the Spaniards also?"

"Yes. We have never warred with Spain, and our king has as his wife a princess of that country. Trading at Spanish ports we learnt that there was a rumour among the Spaniards that far to the west lay a great people possessing vast stores of gold, and riches of all kinds; and so my father, who was the captain of one of these floating castles, determined to sail across the sea, and, in despite of the Spaniards and their rules, endeavour to perform the adventure of discovering, if possible, this great nation."

"What would have happened if the Spaniards had met you as you passed through their waters?"

"Had they succeeded in taking our ship, they would have killed us without mercy; but we had a strong crew, and would

have matched ourselves willingly enough against any Spanish ship, however big, that interfered with us."

"And what became of your ship?"

"She struck during a gale on the coast of Tabasco, and was dashed to pieces. My father and all on board were drowned. But God protected me, and I was thrown ashore unhurt; it being doubtless His intention that I should live to be the first white man to see your great country, and to bring to you the news of the white peoples beyond the sea."

"You know the story about our god Quetzalcoatl," the king said after a long pause. "We had news that you knew all about him. We believe that his descendants will return hither to teach us many things."

"I am aware of it, Sire."

"But do you know also that we of Tezucuo have reason to view the arrival of the Whites with fear? My father, who was full of learning and wisdom, predicted, when on his deathbed, that a white people would shortly arrive from the sea, and would overthrow the Anahuac kingdoms. It is strange, indeed, that within three years of his death you should appear."

"It is strange," Roger agreed. "Assuredly, your Majesty, your father's prophecy did not allude to my people. We are a comparatively small nation, and are not even masters of the whole of our island. We have not one ship to fifty that the Spaniards possess, and have no desire for foreign conquests. We are strong if attacked, and even Spain would find it a hard matter did she endeavour to conquer us; but we should not dream of challenging the rights she exercises over the seas to the west of her. Moreover, our climate is a cold one, and we should not be able to support with comfort the heat of a country like this. It is not from our nation that danger can ever approach you."

"But from the Spaniards?" the king asked gravely.

"I cannot think, Sire, that so great and powerful a nation as yours has reason to dread conquest by the Spaniards. But they are a mighty people; they have extended their rule over many peoples on the other side of the water; and they have

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captured many islands which lie not so very far from your shores."

"How far away?" one of the old counsellors asked.

"A vessel with a favouring wind would sail to your coast thence in twelve or fourteen days," Roger replied.

There was a general exclamation of surprise and uneasiness from Roger's hearers. Many questions were asked him as to the number of men the Spaniards could put in the field. His answer somewhat reassured them.

"Perhaps two thousand would be the utmost they could send from these islands," he said; "though I know not the strength of their various garrisons. But from Spain they could, if they chose, send across the seas in their ships ten times as many."

"We could put over two hundred thousand in the field," the king said proudly.

Roger was silent.

"You do not think," the king went on after a pause, "that twenty thousand of these men are to be feared by a host like ours?"

"With equal arms and armour, no, your Majesty; but with the advantage of their weapons, the fact that they are clad in armour which your spears and arrows and knives would be powerless to pierce, and that many of them would be mounted soldiers, whose rush and impetus in battle it is nigh impossible—even for white infantry who have no fear of the horses, and are themselves clad in armour—to withstand; and that they have in addition these terrible cannon of which I spoke to you; I think that should twenty thousand of the Spaniards land here they would be irresistible. However, I do not think that there is any chance of such an army being brought against you; rich and powerful as Spain is, the expense of preparing such an expedition and the ships required to carry it would be so vast that I do not think she would undertake it. Moreover, she is always so occupied with wars at home that she could not spare such a force for a distant expedition, and I do not therefore think you have any ground

for alarm in the present. I believe that in a very short time Spanish ships may arrive at your ports, and will open trade with your people. I wonder that they have not long since found their way here. Trade would be beneficent to both. They have many commodities that would be most useful to you; you have others that they would prize greatly."

"What are our products they would most value?" the king asked.

"First, and most of all, gold," Roger said. "It is with us the scarcest and most valuable of metals, and all things are valued by it. As with you bags of cocoa are your standard of value, so with them are pieces of gold; a wide estate is worth so much gold; a ship, or a horse, or a suit of armour, so many pieces of gold; and so through everything. All your delicate embroidery work would be valuable in their eyes, as being strange and different to anything we possess; while on their side they could provide you with silks, and satins, and velvets, and cloths, and other fabrics new to you; to say nothing of arms and ironwork vastly superior to any you possess."

One of the old counsellors whispered something in the king's ear, and the latter said to the queen: "Maclutha, I would talk these matters over with my counsellors. I am sure that you and my sister are longing to hear from Roger Hawkshaw all about the ladies of his race, and their dresses and fashions: take him, therefore, into your room while we discuss this matter here."

The two ladies and Roger thereupon went into another apartment, similar in style to that which they had left. The conversation here took a light turn, unrestrained by the presence of the king and his counsellors. They plied him with questions, which Roger answered to the best of his power. He was soon furnished with paper, pens, brushes, and paint; and he drew them several sketches, showing ladies in European fashions, which filled his companions with surprise. It seemed to them impossible that a woman could move with ease and comfort in so much clothing. Then he drew for them a noble

in the court dress of the period, and also the figure of a knight in full armour.

The last astonished them most of all. How could a man move and breathe thus enclosed in metal? Roger admitted that, in a hot climate like that of Mexico, the heat would be terrible. But he pointed out that men so clad were carried on horses, and had no occasion for movement, save of their arms, which, as there were joints in the armour at the shoulder, could be moved in any way with freedom.

"There cannot be much bravery required to fight when protected in this way by metal," the queen said.

"Numbers are killed, nevertheless," Roger replied. "The armour, strong as it is, will not resist the missiles fired from cannon; and the helmets—that is, the part that protects the head—can be beaten in by blows with heavy maces. Moreover, when two parties similarly armed, charge, the shock is so terrible, that horses and riders are alike thrown to the ground, and when thrown down they may be trampled to death by the horses, or killed by footmen before they can recover their feet. Still, there are many who think that some day armour will be given up altogether, for the guns are being improved constantly, and when the balls sent by those carried by footmen are able to pierce any armour, it will no longer be any protection whatever."

"And these ladies of yours," the Princess Aménche asked; "are they very pretty? Because these matters are more to our taste than these ugly arms."

"They differ much from each other, just as they do here," Roger said; "some are homely and others are pretty."

"Are their eyes always blue, and their hair of a bright colour, like yours?"

"Oh no! There is a great difference. Some have hair almost as light as flax, some almost as dark as yours, but not quite so dark. Some have hair almost exactly the colour of gold; some a red, like the fringe of your garments; then there are many shades of brown between red and black. The eyes vary in the same way, people with light hair, and golden, and red, have

either grey or blue eyes; those with brown hair of different shades have brown eyes, sometimes light and sometimes dark brown."

"How strange it must be," the girl laughed, "to see people with hair of so many colours! And which do you like best, Roger Hawkshaw?"

"At the present moment, Princess, I cannot imagine any colour more beautiful than a deep glossy black."

The girl coloured through her hazel skin. "Ah, you know how to flatter in your country also!"

Roger was about to reply when a message was brought from the king desiring them to return to the next room.

"We have been taking all these things that you have told us into grave consideration," the king said, when they were seated; "and have concluded that it will be for the best that this matter of these Spaniards should remain an absolute secret, and that no word shall be spoken to a single person, however dear, by any of those who have heard it. The country has long been in a disturbed state, and constant expeditions are necessary for ourselves and for Mexico, to suppress risings, and put down outbreaks of discontent. Were the news to be whispered about that there is a strange, terrible white people within but a short distance of our shores the result would be disastrous.

"Men's minds would become unsettled, their ordinary employment would be neglected, all sorts of dismal forebodings would seize them, the very worship of the gods might be affected; and instead of being able, should the time of danger ever come, to meet our invaders boldly and fearlessly, they would find us disorganized and disheartened, and our power of resistance greatly diminished. You, Roger Hawkshaw, have told us everything with frankness; we feel that every word you have spoken is true, and that you have a real feeling of friendliness towards us, and that your sympathies are with us rather than with the people of this other white nation. But others would not see it so. Even as it is, there is sure to be a party against you. Were it known that a nation, possibly hostile, of your colour

were but a short distance away, nothing could save you. You would be sacrificed at once to the gods; therefore as for the sake of the nation we have decided that what you have told us shall remain a profound secret to ourselves, so for your own sake we pray you henceforth to say nothing to any of what you have told us. Let men think what they like as to how you have reached our shores: preserve a sort of mystery as to yourself. There is no reason why you should not speak, but even then guardedly, of the wonders of the land inhabited by white men many months' sail across the seas; but in every respect that as little should be said as possible. Montezuma is sure to wish to see you, but before you visit him we will again take counsel together."

"I will, to the best of my power, carry out your Majesty's orders," Roger said. "I fully recognize their wisdom. Indeed, neither at Tabasco nor upon the journey, either to the merchants or to your envoys, have I said a word respecting the Spaniards; but I thought that it was but right that you should know the truth of the matter, especially when you told me of the prediction of your royal father. In future, when I am asked questions, I can always fall back upon silence and reply, truly, 'I am forbidden to tell this.'"

"That will do excellently," the king said. "There is but one point connected with you now that puzzles us—a point which, before you came, confirmed us in the belief that there was something supernatural in your character: How is it that you have come to understand and speak our tongue?"

Roger smiled. "To anyone else, your Majesty, I should have replied, 'I am forbidden to answer that question;' but I wish not to have any mystery with you. During the time I was at Tabasco I was waited upon by a Mexican slave-girl, who taught me her tongue."

The king burst into a hearty laugh, in which even the grave counsellors joined, at this simple solution at what had appeared to them so strange a mystery.

"Cuitcatl," the king said to one of the young nobles, "I hand over Roger Hawkshaw to your charge. You see you need not

be afraid of him, and he will throw no spells over you. Show him all there is to see in the city; but go not far away, for we shall have frequent occasions to speak to him. He will have a seat in the council, and at our own table. See that all know that we most highly esteem and desire to honour him."

Bowing deeply to the king, queen, and princess, Roger followed the young noble into whose charge he had been given. For a long time they continued their way down passages and corridors, until it seemed to Roger that it was a town rather than a building that he was traversing. At last his conductor pushed aside a hanging and entered an apartment.

"These are my rooms," he said; "you are now master here. All the nobles of the council, and those whom the king wishes to have about his person, have suites of apartments in the palace. I hope some day to have the pleasure of entertaining you on my own estate, which lies a day's journey away to the north-east of the lake. Now, you will doubtless be glad to retire to rest at once, for you have had a long and weary time."

So saying, he led the way to a small chamber, leading out of the larger one. Here a luxurious couch was arranged, and it was not many minutes before Roger was asleep, for he was indeed completely worn out, and was too much fatigued even to think over the strange position in which he found himself.

He woked early, for upon his journeys the caravan had always started at daybreak, so as to get as much as possible of the journey done before the heat of the day set in. For a moment he wondered vaguely where he was, and then as recollection returned to him he leapt from his couch, threw back the hangings before the window, and gazed out.

Glass was unknown in Mexico, nor was it a requisite in the balmy climate of the valley. The prospect was a charming one. Before him lay a garden more beautiful than any he had ever beheld. It was filled with shrubs and flowers, and a delightful perfume filled the air; fountains of bright water threw their jets high above the sweet-scented groves and shrubberies. Several large ponds glistened in the morning sun: on some of these were islands accessible by light bridges, and

on the islands were fanciful pavilions. Waterfowl floated on the surface of the ponds or stalked fearlessly on the marble pavement that surrounded them; the songs of innumerable birds filled the air. Roger was gazing in delight at the scene when Cuiteatl's voice saluted him :--

"So you are up betimes; are you ready for your bath, or will you take some chocolate first?"

"Bath first, please," Roger replied; and his guide led the way across the large room, and, drawing a hanging aside, showed Roger into a bath-room.

The walls and floors were entirely covered with marble; in the centre was a bath, some seven feet square, with a stream of water running into it from the mouth of a grotesque animal's head.

"Every apartment has its bath-room," Cuiteatl said. "The water runs for an hour after sunrise only, but it can be turned on at any hour. It seems a waste, but we are far above the lower portion of the garden, and the water therefore runs into a tank and thence works the fountains there. Would you like your attendant to rub you in the bath, or when you come out of it, for both methods are in use with us."

Roger declined both alternatives, and it was not very long before he rejoined his companion in the central apartment. Chocolate, light cakes, and fruit were at once served.

"We had best visit the gardens first, before the sun gains too much power. There are charming arbours and pavilions in shady spots for taking one's ease at the middle of the day; but for walking about the early hours are the best."

The gardens were of great extent, and Roger was surprised at the extreme fearlessness of the innumerable birds of all kinds that seem to regard them as their natural home.

"Why should they not be fearless?" Cuiteatl said, when he expressed his surprise. "They have never been frightened, and regard all who come here as their friends, rather than as their enemies. They have abundance of the food which they love best. They make their nests among the plants or in the trees which they would use were they wild. The ponds are

full of fish, and the water-birds can find a far richer supply here than elsewhere. When the ladies come the birds flock around them and settle on their heads and shoulders, and take crumbs of sweet cake from their hands. Many birds must, of course, be caged, and you will see that there are large aviaries scattered here and there in the garden. In these are the hawks and eagles and many other birds which could not be tamed so far as to remain in the garden unconfined."

After wandering for nearly two hours in the garden they returned to the palace, and afterwards went down to the market-place, which was crowded, as it was the fifth day of the week. Cuitcatl had taken with them six officials of the palace, to clear the way and prevent the people from crowding in upon them. Roger was struck with the orderly demeanour of the people. They seemed merry and lively, but their mirth was of a quiet kind, and there was everywhere an air of decorum and gentleness, in strong contrast to that of a European crowd. "Why," he said to himself, "there is more noise at home, when two or three boats come in laden with pilchards, than is made by all these thousands and thousands of people!"

There was no pressing or pushing, and the order of the officials, "Make way for the king's guest, the great Roger Hawkshaw!" was at once obeyed, and the people drew aside, gazing at him curiously but respectfully, and saluting as if to one of their own great nobles. The market was an extensive square, surrounded by deep porticoes, and each description of merchandize had its allotted quarter. In one was seen cotton piled up in bales, or manufactured into dresses and articles of domestic use, such as tapestry, curtains and coverlids. The goldsmiths had a quarter assigned to them. There Roger admired bracelets, necklaces and ear-rings, delicately chased and carved, together with many curious toys made in imitation of birds and fishes, with scales and feathers alternately of gold and silver, and with movable heads and bodies.

In another quarter were the stores of the potters, with dishes and plates, cups and basins of every degree of fineness, for

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the use of poor and rich, vases of wood, elaborately carved varnished or gilt. Near these Roger examined some hatchets made of copper alloyed with tin, and as he felt the hardness of the metal thought to himself that the natives, if informed as to the size and proportions of cannon, would have no difficulty in founding those weapons. Then there were certain shops devoted to the sale of articles needed by soldiers. The helmets fashioned into the shape of the head of some wild animal, with grinning teeth and bristling crest; the quilted doublets of cotton; the rich surcoats of feather; mail and weapons of all sorts; copper-headed lances and arrows, and the broad Mexican sword, with its sharp blade of *itzli*, a hard polished stone, which served many of the purposes of steel to the Aztecs. Of this material were the razors made, with which barbers were engaged in operating in their booths.

Many shops were well provided with drugs, roots, and different medicinal preparations; for Mexico abounded in medicinal plants, and the study of their uses was considered one of the most useful of the sciences, and in this respect the Mexicans were considerably in advance of the people of Europe. There were shops for the sale of blank books, or rolls, for the hieroglyphic picture-writing. Under some of the porticoes were hides, raw and dressed; and various articles for domestic or personal use, made of leather.

Animals, both wild and tame, were offered for sale, and near them Roger saw a gang of slaves with collars round their necks, and these were also, Cuitcatl told him, for sale. The portion of the market devoted to the sale of provisions was a large one. Here were meats of all kinds, domestic poultry, game from the neighbouring mountains, and fish from the streams; together with an immense variety of fruit, green vegetables, and maize. Here were ready cooked foods for immediate use—sold hot to passers-by, and eaten as they stood—with stalls of pastry of many kinds, bread, cakes, and confectionery; chocolate, flavoured with vanilla and other spices, and *pulque*, prepared with many varying flavours, tempted the passers-by. All these commodities and every

stall and portico were set out and well-nigh covered with flowers.

After leaving the market Roger proceeded with his companion to the edge of the lake. It was dotted with countless canoes traversing it in all directions, filled with people passing to and fro between the great capitals or neighbouring cities, bent either upon pleasure or trade. After feasting his eyes for a considerable time upon the lovely and animated scene Roger returned with his companion to the palace.

In the afternoon there was a great gathering of nobles at the palace to enable a far wider circle than those assembled the evening before to see and hear the king's white guest. One of the old counsellors who had been present at the previous meeting, acted as questioner, and this enabled Roger to escape certain queries to which he would have had difficulty in replying; and while the assembly heard much of the various wonders of the white people they learned nothing of the manner in which the stranger had reached their shores, or the object of his coming; and at the end the general impression that remained upon them was that he was a mysterious and supernatural being, who had come to teach the people new arts and inventions. When the meeting was over, Roger retired again to the private apartments, and entertained the ladies there with many details of European life and manners, and by sketching for them houses, and ships, and other objects they demanded.

Two hours later Cacama came in. He was evidently vexed and anxious: "I am sorry to say, Roger Hawkshaw," he said, "that to-morrow you must accompany me across the lake to Mexico. I have had four despatches to-day from my Uncle Montezuma; he blames me for having permitted you to enter the city before consulting the priests at his capital. You know they are all-powerful there. Montezuma, with all his pride and haughtiness, is but their humble servant. He says that sacrifices have been offered up, and that the auguries are unfavourable, and that the priests declare your presence to be a danger to Mexico. I have no doubt that when they see

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you this opinion will be changed, and I shall do my best to prepare the way for you. I have already sent a private messenger to the high-priest, speaking in the highest terms of you, and strengthening my recommendation by some valuable presents, to which priests are not more than other men inaccessible.

Roger saw, by the look of dismay upon the faces of the queen and the princess, that they considered the news very grave.

"Must he go?" the queen asked in a low voice.

"How can it be helped?" Cacama replied. "Montezuma is supreme; and he and the priests together are all-powerful. Roger is not like other men. Were he so, I would tell him when night falls to fly, and Cuitcatl would risk the consequences, I am sure, and act as his guide; but being as he is, where could he go, or where could he hide? Were it known in the morning that he was missing, a hundred messengers from Mexico would carry the news to every town and village in the country. Even if we coloured his skin and his hair, his height would attract attention, for he is taller by half a head, and broader by far than any Mexican. But even did he, by travelling by night and hiding by day, get at last beyond the boundary of our kingdoms, what would then be his fate?—to die of hunger or thirst, or to be slain by wild tribes. What say you, Roger Hawkshaw? Will you risk these unknown dangers, or will you go to Montezuma to-morrow?"

"Were I sure that the priests would decide against me, and that I should be sacrificed to their great idol, I would risk death in any other form rather than that," Roger replied; "but it may be that when they see I have no evil intentions, and neither thought nor power of injuring Mexico, they may lay aside their animosity against me."

"They do not believe that you will injure Mexico," Ameneche said passionately; "they only want you for a sacrifice. They think that a being so strange and rare as a white man would be of all the most acceptable victim to their god. My brother, do not let him go," and the girl burst into tears.

"My little sister," Cacama said tenderly, "you know that I

am powerless in the matter. In my grandfather's time he would have answered a demand that a guest of his should be given up by a message of defiance; but times have changed since then, and the greater part of my kingdom no longer remains to me. My brother, who disputed my right to the throne, reigns over a large portion of it. Montezuma has seized fertile provinces. I am little more than the lord of a city, and could offer no resistance for a single day to the power of the Emperor. But you must remember that as yet we do not know that the priests will decide against him. I myself shall go with him, and I have already, as I have told you, taken some steps to incline the priests in his favour. When I arrive there to-morrow I will exert myself personally; I have many friends among the highest at Montezuma's court, and will also pray these to use their influence. Should I fail all will not be lost. It is likely that if they decide upon sacrificing you, Roger, they will make you the victim to the god Tezcatlepoça, 'the soul of the world.' For him is always chosen the captive most distinguished for his appearance. For a year he is treated as the representative of the god, he is nobly cared for, he is attended by a train of royal pages, is worshipped by the people as he passes through the street, and is feasted at the tables of the nobles. Were you selected for this, as we consider it, great honour there would be at least a year before you; and you might then in some manner make your escape beyond our boundaries. At any rate, some time is sure to elapse before your fate will be determined upon; and I can promise that I will do all in my power to aid you to escape, should you determine upon flight."

"I thank you most heartily," Roger said. "I have no fear of death in battle, but to me it would be very horrible to be put to death as a victim on a festival; and I would rather escape and drown myself in the lake than that such should be my fate. Still, if it must be so, it must; and I trust that I may behave as befits an Englishman in such an extremity."

Amenche here stepped forward to her brother, and spoke earnestly in his ear.

"My sister reminds me," he said, "that we have sometimes

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another form of sacrifice; and that if I can do nought else I might be able to persuade the priests to pronounce in favour of that. It is only adopted in the case of a captive of distinction; who, instead of being sacrificed, is sometimes matched against a number of Mexicans. The combat takes place on a great circular stone in the sight of the whole city. The captive is provided with arms, and meets his opponents one by one. If he defeat them all—which has more than once happened in our history—he is allowed to go free."

"That would suit me best by far," Roger said eagerly. "I have no doubt but that I should be killed, still I should die in fair fighting against numbers; and it would be no worse than if I had fallen fighting the Moorish pirates on the deck of our ship."

"I should think that it could be managed," Cacama said. "I should tell them that, at present none could say whether you were a superhuman being or no, and that it might bring some misfortune upon the nation were a messenger of the gods put to death. This trial would prove that. If the gods protected you, you would triumph; if they were not on your side, you would be defeated."

"I should do my best," Roger said quietly. "I have been well taught the use of arms, and in our long voyage here we practised daily. In point of skill I could hold my own with any on board, though there were many to whom I was but a child in point of strength. In that matter, however, I have doubtless gained much since then. I shall be thankful indeed, Prince, if you can persuade them to fix on this mode of execution for me; and I thank you very gratefully, Princess, for suggesting it."

They talked for some time longer, and then Roger retired to his apartment.

The next morning, soon after sunrise, he embarked with Cacama in a canoe, paddled by six rowers.

"My wife and sister bade me say farewell to you," Cacama said; "they are sorely grieved at your going, and hope that you may return with me this afternoon. But if not they bade me

say that they will do all that is in their power; and women can exert influence as well as men on your behalf."

It was a long row across the lake to Mexico. Large as was the population of Tezcuco, which was estimated by the Spaniards to contain a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants that of Mexico was fully three times as great. As Montezuma had not yet determined upon the course which was to be pursued towards this mysterious stranger, the people had not been informed of his coming. A strong guard of soldiers with several officers of the palace met the party upon its landing, surrounded them, and marched quickly through the streets to the palace. The buildings resembled those of Tezcuco, and were massive and solid in character; but were not, Roger thought, grander or more splendid than those in the rival capital. The town was intersected by canals, and the bridges across these could be raised, adding largely to the defensive power of the place.

Upon reaching the palace the soldiers drew back, and the palace guard took charge of the party and led them into a large apartment, where they waited until the emperor was ready to receive them. Presently two court officials entered, and placing a mantle of coarse cotton over Roger signed to him to take off his sandals. Cacama had already informed him that even the highest nobles of the land, with the exception of those of royal blood, were obliged to enter Montezuma's presence in this attire as emblematic of their humility. He also charged Roger that it was the etiquette that all should keep their eyes fixed on the ground until addressed by Montezuma.

Accompanied by Cacama, Roger followed the officials. Passing through several corridors they entered a vast hall. Roger was aware that at the farther end the emperor was seated, surrounded by a numerous body of nobles; but the instant he entered the room he followed the instructions of Cacama, and saluted to the ground, and then advanced with downcast eyes until the officials by his side ordered him to pause. Montezuma was a victim of superstition, and had been seriously discom-

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posed at the news of the arrival of this mysterious visitor; the more so that the priests themselves were unable to decide whether his visit was a good or evil augury. As he looked at the tall figure before him, with its strange coloured skin and hair and the air of independence and fearlessness that was visible in the pose, notwithstanding the downcast eyes, he could not but be favourably impressed despite his fears.

"You are welcome to our court," he said, "if you come in peace and goodwill."

"I come in peace and good will to your Majesty and your empire," Roger said.

"We have heard that you come from far beyond the seas, where dwell a people having strange ways, who live in floating castles, and who fight with weapons making thunder."

Roger bowed. "Your Majesty has been correctly informed."

"Do the people there worship the same gods that we do?"

"They do not, your Majesty; the people there worship the one Great God—the God of the skies, the air, and the earth."

"And that God sent you hither?" Montezuma asked.

"Assuredly, Sire. He directs all things."

"Each country has its gods. The gods of Mexico have given us victory over all the peoples from sea to sea."

Roger bowed. He did not feel called upon to contradict the emperor.

"How is it that you came alone to this land?"

"I wished to see it," Roger said, "reports of its greatness and power having reached across the seas. Had I come with others it might have been thought that I came as an enemy; but coming alone, and without arms, it could not be suspected that my intentions were other than friendly."

Montezuma appeared impressed with this answer. The audience lasted for upwards of half an hour; Montezuma asking many questions about the ships, the arms, the mode of government, and other matters among the white people. He then bowed his head. The official signified that the audience was over, and that Roger was to retire. As he had been instructed by Cacama he withdrew, keeping his face to the emperor. He

was conducted to a different apartment. Here a table was laid, and he was served by attendants of the court, who, however, made no reply to any questions he asked them, and had evidently received orders to hold no verbal communication with him.

CHAPTER X.

NEWS FROM THE COAST.

IT was with a feeling of pleasure and relief that, after some hours, Roger saw the hangings drawn aside, and Cacama enter. "Come, my friend, the council is over, and you may return with me."

Cacama was evidently anxious to be off at once, and Roger followed him without a question. One of the pages of the palace led the way through a long series of passages, and at last Roger found himself outside the palace, where a door opened into a canal. Here Cacama's boat was lying; the young king and Roger took their seats, and the canoe dashed off at once.

"It has been a hard fight in the council," Cacama said. "No two men were of the same opinion. Even the priests were divided among themselves; and Montezuma was as undecided at the end as he was at the beginning, so that the decision is postponed. Then the question arose, were you to be treated as a guest or as a prisoner, and this I settled by saying that I would take you back with me to Tezcuco, and produce you whenever required. So in order to avoid excitement among the people, I sent word for the boat to be brought round to that quiet entrance to the palace, by which means we avoided passing through the streets altogether.

"At one time it seemed to me that the decision would go against you, on the ground that had you been a supernatural being you would have had new arts to teach the people. Fortunately, I had brought with me the pictures you made

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for my wife and sister, and these I showed them. I pointed out that they were altogether different from the work of our own scribes; that these drew stiff images that looked like representations, not of men and animals, but of wooden creatures, while in your drawings it seemed as if the men and animals were moving across the paper; and that were you to teach our scribes thus to portray objects it would make a profound alteration in Mexican art.

"This made a great impression upon them. Many of the nobles belonging to the Council of Education were present, and Montezuma himself is fond of art; all were greatly struck with your paintings, and these certainly went a long way towards strengthening my party. When we get back you shall do some pictures of things such as they see here, and are accustomed to. Perhaps you could do even better still if you were to try."

"I could make much more finished pictures," Roger said; "these were only sketched off in haste, and with such colours as came to hand; but if I had pigments, and could mix the colours as I wanted them, I could produce very much better effect."

Roger, as a child, had been placed by his father during the latter's long absences from home, at a school kept by some monks at a monastery at Plymouth, in order that he might learn to read and write—as these accomplishments would be of great use to him as a master mariner. His fondness for painting attracted the attention of one of the old monks, who illuminated missals, and he had permitted him to copy many of the manuscripts in the monastery, and had given him instructions in the art. He had indeed been so struck with the talent the boy showed that he told Reuben Hawkshaw that if he would let his son devote himself to art he would make a famous painter. The sailor had scoffed at the idea; and Roger himself, fond as he was of painting, would have been reluctant to abandon the idea of going to sea. The instructions he had obtained, however, up to the age of twelve, when he went on his first voyage with his father, had been of great assistance to

him. Thanks to his natural talent, his visits to the churches at the various ports at which the ship touched, and to the fact that he had plenty of time on board to practise the art, his pictures were surprisingly good, and had excited a great deal of attention on the part of the friends and acquaintances of Master Diggory Beggs.

Upon his return to Tezcuco, Cacama ordered the scribes to furnish him with large sheets of the best paper, brushes, and pigments. The colours were all bright and glaring ones; but by mixing them, and adding some sombre dyes he obtained in the market, Roger succeeded in getting the required tints. Taking his place in the garden, at a point where he commanded the lake near at hand, dotted with canoes, and the city of Mexico, with its background of hills, in the distance, Roger set to work. To the surprise of the scribe who had been ordered to assist him, he mixed the colours with oil instead of water, and then began his picture. He worked as long as there was sufficient light, and recommenced it the next morning directly after sunrise, and continued at work all day, and by evening had finished the picture, three feet by two, which, although it would not be considered remarkable in Europe, excited the most lively admiration on the part of Cacama and the ladies. He explained to the king that as he had none of the spirit that was used in conjunction with the oil to make it dry rapidly it would be some days before the picture would be sufficiently dry to be touched.

Cacama, however, sent it off the next morning under charge of his principal scribe to Montezuma, who sent back word that he was astonished indeed at this work of art, which seemed to him to be almost magical; and he sent in return a large golden goblet to Roger, in token of his satisfaction. Cacama was summoned to a council on the following day; and returned, saying that the picture had quite turned the scale in Roger's favour; that it had been examined by the chief scribes and the men of science, who all agreed that no such thing had been seen before; and that a person who was thus able to turn, as it were, a piece of paper into a mirror, and

to fix upon it the representation of scenes just as the eye beheld them, must be possessed of powers altogether strange and supernatural. They desired to know whether he would teach his methods to some of the chief scribes of the emperor.

Cacama warmly congratulated Roger on the result: "You are now safe for the present, at any rate," he said, "and the priests are silenced. You may have trouble in the future, but for the time Montezuma's love of art has overcome his doubts and fears as to good and evil omens."

"Shall I have to take up my residence in Mexico?"

"I hardly think so," Cacama replied. "Tezcuco is still acknowledged the centre of the arts and sciences of Anahuac. Here are the best schools of the scribes, and they come here to be instructed in hieroglyphic writing from all parts of the kingdom. Moreover, in that way Montezuma will have less uneasiness concerning you; he will think that even if the omens be unfavourable there will be no danger so long as you are at a distance from his capital; therefore, I think he is more likely to order some of the scribes to take up their residence here for a time than he is to bid you to cross to teach them there."

Such in fact was the purport of the message received from Montezuma on the following day. Six of the most accomplished scribes of Mexico were to proceed at once to Tezcuco, there to be instructed in the new art; and the next day Roger found himself established in a room in the palace with the six Aztec scribes, and six of those most celebrated for their skill in Tezcuco. Some attendants were told off to mix colours under his directions, and to purchase for him in the market all kinds of dyes and colours he might require.

A male and female slave, were, at Roger's request, placed at his service, to act as models; and the attendants had orders to fetch from the cages and aviaries any beasts and birds he might desire to copy. Roger had at first some difficulty in preserving his gravity at thus undertaking charge of an art school. At first he confined himself to sketching from the models with a burnt stick on the white paper, and in seeing

that his pupils did the same. Their drawing had hitherto been purely conventional; they had always drawn a man in a certain way, not because they saw him so, but because that was the way in which they had been taught to draw him; and he had great difficulty in getting them to depart altogether from these lines and to draw the model exactly as he stood before them.

What he called his school hours lasted but four hours a day; and as he did this work in the middle of the day, when it was too hot to go out, but very pleasant in the rooms with their thick walls and semi-shaded windows, it interfered but little with his daily life. He had now a set of apartments next to those of Cuiteatl, with attendants to wait upon him; but his time was spent as much in the young noble's rooms as in his own. In the morning they walked together, either in the town or beyond its walls, in the evening they spent hours upon the lake, sometimes in large canoes with gay parties, the boats decked with flowers; while at a short distance another boat with musicians followed in their wake, the melody, which was by no means agreeable to Roger when close, coming softly across the water. With Cuiteatl as a guide, Roger visited the schools where the young nobles were educated, and which reminded him much of that at which he had for five or six years been taught.

He also frequently witnessed the drilling of the soldiers. This was of a very simple character, consisting principally in teaching them to move together in masses and to shoot with a bow. The bows were light and the arrows small, and Roger thought that they could scarcely be very formidable weapons even against men clad in quilted cotton; for although they might wound and annoy they could seldom kill.

One evening, about five months after his arrival, Roger had just returned from an excursion upon the lake, and he and Cuiteatl were seated in the latter's rooms sipping chocolate, when the hangings of the door were drawn aside suddenly and Amenche entered. With an exclamation of surprise, the two young men rose to their feet and saluted deeply.

“You must fly,” she exclaimed to Roger, “and at once. The royal boat has just come from Mexico with two nobles and a guard; they have orders to carry you back with them. The news has arrived that several floating castles, filled with white men with strange arms and animals, have arrived on the coast. Secret council has been held, and Montezuma is full of alarm. The priests have decided that you are undoubtedly a spy, and must be sacrificed at once to the gods. I happened to be behind the hanging, heard what was said, and hurried away to warn you. There is not a moment to lose. Go round to the garden, and conceal yourself in the shrubbery near the eagle-house. I will tell Cacama where you are, and he will come or send down to you to say what had best be done, and where you are to go. Do not delay an instant; the orders were urgent, and they will be here in a minute or two to seize you. Not a word now. Go! I must not be found here. I will see you again,” and she was gone.

“Come, my friend,” Cuitcatl said; “there is evidently not a moment to be lost.”

Roger ran into his room, emptied from a drawer where they were lying, the gold ornaments and presents he had received, and tied them in a cloth; caught up his sword, and then with Cuitcatl hurried down the passage. Just as they reached the end, they saw a party appear at the other extremity preceded by an official carrying torches.

“We are but just in time,” the young noble said; “the princess has saved your life.”

In two or three minutes they were in the garden, and keeping carefully in the shade of the shrubs, so as to escape the view of any who might be sitting at the windows or on the flat roof of the palace, enjoying the lovely evening and the bright moonlight, they made their way cautiously down to the eagle-house, which lay at the other end of the garden, nearly half a mile from the palace. The whole thing had come so suddenly upon Roger, that he could scarcely believe, even now, that his pleasant and tranquil time had come to an end, and he was in danger of being dragged away and instantly sacrificed.

Scarce a word was spoken until they reached the spot indicated. To this grew a large patch of bamboos.

"We will take refuge here for the present," Cuitcatl said. "It is hardly likely they will search the gardens at night; it would need an army to do so thoroughly. If we hear footsteps approaching we can take refuge inside, and meantime let us seat ourselves here. These must be the people you told us of the first night you came."

"No doubt they are so; but, Cuitcatl, you had best return at once to your chamber. You will be missed as well as I shall, and it would be suspected that you had a share in my flight; and if I should make my escape the emperor's vengeance may fall on you. Pray leave me at once. I should be most unhappy if my misfortunes brought trouble upon you; you have been like a brother to me since I came here."

"I should not think of leaving you," the young noble said firmly.

"But you can do me more good by going, Cuitcatl. You will see what is taking place there, and may throw them off the scent; while here you can do me no good whatever, and indeed might do me harm. Were I found here with you I should be forced to surrender without striking a blow, for I should be afraid to resist, lest I should bring harm upon you; whereas, if I am alone, I would fight to the death rather than surrender. Besides you will be able to consult the princess, and can bring down such things as you may consider will aid me in my flight; though how I am to escape the search there will be after me is more than I can guess. Pray go at once, for the sooner you go the sooner you can bring me back news of what is being done up there."

Cuitcatl saw the justice of Roger's reasoning. "I may, at least, throw them off the scent," he said, "and see about preparing for your flight. You promise to hide in the bamboos there, if searchers should come in this direction?"

"Certainly I do. I will do all in my power to conceal myself, and will only fight if there be no other way."

Cuitcatl at once glided noiselessly off, keeping as before in

the shadow of the bushes. For an hour and a half Roger remained alone. He was sitting under the shadow of the bamboos, and could in a moment withdraw himself among them. At last he thought he heard a slight noise, and drew back towards the thick canes. A moment later, however, he stepped forward, as a figure he at once recognized advanced across a patch of moonlight from the next clump of shrubs.

"All is well so far," Quitcatl said. "Directly I entered the palace, an attendant told me that I was being enquired for, and I proceeded straight to the royal apartments. Montezuma's messengers were there; they at once asked me if I had seen you. I said yes, that we had been walking together, but that you had not returned with me, as you said that the night was so lovely you should remain out for some time longer. They asked me if I could lead them to where you were; but I said that you had not told me which way you should go, and you might, for aught I knew, have taken a canoe and gone for a moonlight row on the lake, as was often your custom.

"Orders have been issued to the city guard to arrest you immediately, wherever you might be found; and the envoys themselves started at once with the guard they had brought with them to the waterside. Up to that time Cucama, who had not left them, was in ignorance what had become of you, and I could see he was anxious and much troubled."

"Do you know where he is?' he asked me as soon as we were alone.

"Would it not be better, your Majesty,' I said, 'that you should remain in ignorance? Should he escape, Montezuma will be furious; and it might be well that you should be able to affirm on your oath that you knew nothing of him, and were in no way privy to his escape.'

"But is there a chance of his escaping?' he asked.

"We will do what we can,' I said; 'and we can do no more. With a disguise, a guide, and arms, Roger Hawkshaw may be able to make his way through the country, in spite of Montezuma and his army. I should think that the best thing will be to get him into a small canoe, take him to the end of

the lake, and land him near Tepechpan. Then he can strike up north, take to the hills there, and then journey east. All the roads direct from here will be so guarded that it will be impossible to get through. The search will be close everywhere; but there will be more chance of escape on that line than from here.'

"But how about the guide? Whom can we trust?"

"I have one of my hunters in the town; he brought some game down from my estate to-day, and was not to return until to-morrow. I know where he lodges; he is a brave fellow, and carried my banner in the last campaign."

"You will let me know before he starts?" the king asked.

"I will, your Majesty. The moon will not be down for three hours yet, and he cannot attempt to fly until it has set."

"As I left the royal apartment, one of the female attendants came up, and putting her finger on her lip signed to me to follow her. I did so, and she led me to the apartment where the Queen and Princess Amonche were awaiting me."

"You have left your friend safe, Cuitcatl?" the queen said. 'The princess has told me the part she has taken in the affair. It was foolish, but I cannot blame her, though if Montezuma knew by whose means the prey had slipped from his fingers the least she could expect would be to be ordered to retire for life to one of the temples. Have you formed any plans?'

"I told her what I had thought of."

"That seems as good a plan as any other," she said. 'He will need paints to disguise himself, the dress of a peasant, and arms.'

"He has his sword," I said.

"He cannot take that. Its golden handle would betray him at once. A heavy woodman's axe and a bow and spear would be the most suitable."

"He shall have them," I said; 'my hunter shall take them, and place them in the canoe in readiness.'

"What are you going to do now?"

"I am going first into the town to give my hunter his instructions, and bid him be at the lake entrance to the

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gardens half an hour after the moon has set. I shall want the key of the gate. Next I shall go down and tell Roger what preparations have been made, and then return here, for it is best I should be seen in the palace. Then, just as the moon sets, I shall go down again to him.'

"Come here on your way, Cuitcatl. I shall go down with Ameneche to say good-bye to him. This obstinate girl has determined to go, and I cannot let her go alone.'

"As soon as I left them, I went down to the town and found my hunter, who has taken a vow to lay down his life to save you if necessary. Here are some peasant's clothes—a coarse cotton mantle, and a short skirt. Here is a jar of dye. You had better strip at once and let me colour you, and then put on these clothes, it will be too dark to see to do it properly when I return; besides, time will be short then. This small jar contains some dye from the juico of a plant which will turn your hair black—at least, as they use it for dyeing the skins of animals black I suppose it will affect your hair."

Roger at once took off his gaudy attire, and was stained from head to foot with the contents of the jug, and then rubbed his hair with the liquid from the smaller vessel. Then he put on the peasant's clothes.

"You will pass well now," Cuitcatl said, leading him out in the moonlight, so that he could obtain a good view of him. "It is only your height that is against you; still some men are taller than others; though I never saw one as tall as you, and you will certainly be stared at. Is there anything else in the way of arms you would like beside the axe and spear?"

"I shall make myself a bow and arrows, when we get fairly away," Roger said.

"I did not know you could use them."

"I could not use such little things as those your people carry; but we still use the bow in England, and every boy is obliged by law to practise with it. With such a bow as I should make I could send an arrow three times as far as those puny weapons of yours, and could keep my foes at a distance, whereas otherwise they could shoot me down as they chose."

"They will not shoot you down," Cuitcatl said. "You may be quite sure that the orders will be to take you alive, and this will give you a great advantage if you are attacked. But I must be going up now to the palace again, to show myself for a time among our friends. Just as the moon sets I will be here."

"Will you thank the queen and princess for their kindness," Roger said, "and say that much as I should like to say good-bye to them, I would not that they should run any risks by coming to see me?"

"They will come," Cuitcatl said, "unless I am greatly mistaken. The princess would come, even if her uncle Montezuma were himself watching her."

Roger sat down again, and watched the moon going down. he felt a certain sense of exhilaration at the thought that he was about to enter upon a life of active adventure again. It had seemed to him lately that his life was to be spent in this strange country, cut off from all chances of ever returning to England; and that sooner or later he was assuredly destined to form a part of their hideous sacrifices. The party against him had been silenced for a moment, but would be sure to gather strength again, and he would be called upon either to worship these bloodstained idols, or to die. Life was pleasant enough as it was at present, with the friendship of the young king, and the kindness of the queen and princess; but he would soon get tired of it with its everlasting sunshine, and its flowers, and its idleness.

At last the moon set, and in a few minutes he heard footsteps approaching, and Cuitcatl and two veiled figures came up. The queen came straight up to him.

"We are very sorry to lose you, Roger Hawkshaw," she said gently; "and were there a hope of doing so successfully, we would defy the cruel orders from Montezuma; but it would bring ruin on our people."

"I know that it cannot be done, Madam," Roger said. "I thank you and the king most heartily for all your kindness to me. If I escape to my own country, I shall remember it all

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my life; and I will pray to the God we worship to give you happiness."

"Take this," the queen said, putting a small bag into his hand; "you have told me that these gems are as much prized among your people as they are here, and you can more easily conceal them than gold. I have taken them with the king's permission from the royal treasure, and should you reach your distant home in safety, they ought to make you rich for the rest of your life; and now farewell. Whatever the priests may say, Cacama and I know that you came as a friend and meant us no harm. Now Ameneche," she said, "come and say good-bye."

The girl came forward slowly. She took Roger's hand and gazed up into his face, she seemed to try to speak, and then Roger felt her sway suddenly, and caught her just as she would have fallen.

"Give her to me," the queen said, "it is best so, by far. Hurry away, Roger; you have done harm enough without meaning it. Cuitcatl, take him away at once."

The young noble took Roger's hand and hurried him away.

"What is the matter?" he asked, bewildered. "What did the queen mean—that I had done harm enough?"

"Do you mean to say that you have not seen that Ameneche loves you?"

"I never dreamt of such a thing," Roger exclaimed.

"Cacama and the queen, and all of us who have seen her with you, knew it long ago; and had it not been for this unlucky news to-day, Cacama would, in a short time, have offered you her hand. There has been a scene to-night between her and her brother, for she declared that she would go with you, and share your dangers whatever they might be. She has for the last three hours been confined in her chamber, and she was only allowed to come down to say good-bye to you on her swearing that she would return with the queen to her room."

"I am awfully sorry," Roger said; "I never dreamt of such a thing; the princess has always been very kind to me, but

I should never have thought of raising my eyes so high. Besides, as I have told you, I am still scarce a man; and with us one does not think of marriage until he is five or six years older than I am."

"No one blames you at all," Cuitcatl said. "The king and queen both told her that they were sure you had not thought of her in that way, though they naturally supposed that, had you remained here, you would have gladly formed such an alliance when it was offered you. However, it is no use talking any more about it, you will have difficulties enough before you, and would have had no chance whatever of getting through them if encumbered with her. Cacama told her so, but she scoffed at the idea of danger. Mexican women, when they love, are ready for any sacrifice. Cacama did not press that, but chiefly spoke of the terrible scandal it would be, were she—his sister and the niece of Montezuma—to be brought back with you a captive."

They were now at the gate. Cuitcatl opened it, and locked it again after him. A figure was standing outside.

"This is my follower; you may rely upon him to serve you to the last. Bathalda, this is my white friend; you will serve him as you would me?"

The man took Roger's hand, and carried it to his forehead. "My life is yours, my lord," he said.

"Is everything ready, Bathalda?" asked Cuitcatl.

"Yes, my lord; I have the canoe hidden among the rocks with the arms and some food. It is but a few hundred yards away."

"Let us be off then, at once," Cuitcatl said.

The man led the way down to the lake, and then along the shore for some little distance.

"There is the canoe," he said.

Cuitcatl embraced Roger: "I wish that I could go with you, my white brother, and share your dangers down to the coast," he said, "but I could aid you but little, and my life would be forfeited on my return. May the gods of Mexico, and the God you worship, protect you. It may be (who knows?,

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that some day you may return hither; Quiteatl's heart will be rejoiced to see you."

"Thank you for all your kindness," Roger said; "whatever befalls me I shall never forget it. Thank Cuema for all he has done in my favour; and say good-bye for me to the princess. Tell her that it is better so, for that so soft a flower would soon droop and pine away in my cold country."

Roger took his seat in the canoe, Bathalda seized the paddle, and the little boat shot out from the shore. For some distance they kept close in under the shadow of the land, Bathalda saying that two or three royal canoes were rowing up and down opposite the town, and that every canoe putting off had been stopped and questioned. Several times, when the sound of a paddle was heard out on the lake, Bathalda stopped rowing for a time; but after keeping close to the shore for an hour he struck out more boldly, and after two hours' further rowing, approached the shore again.

"This is the point where we must land," he said. "Four hours' walking will take us among the hills; but before we leave the canoe we will half fill it with stones, then knock a hole in her bottom and push her out into the lake to sink. Were she found here in the morning it might afford a clue as to the way we had taken."

This was done, and then they started for the hills.

Alone Roger would have had great difficulty in making his way along the paths running between the cultivated fields, but his companion led the way without hesitation, seeing, apparently, as well as if it had been broad daylight. Roger carried the axe, which was a heavy one, on one shoulder and in the other hand the spear, which he used as a walking-stick. Before daylight broke they were ascending the hills, which were wild and rugged. They passed several villages lying high up on rugged hilltops, and inaccessible, save by ladders, which could be drawn up in case of attack.

"The tribes here have only recently been conquered," Bathalda said. "They pay tribute to Mexico, but are a wild



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race; and as there is nothing to be obtained from them but hard knocks they are but little interfered with."

Getting deeper among the hills, Bathalda, just as morning was breaking, led the way up a ravine down which a little stream trickled, and found a resting-place among a number of great rocks that had fallen from above.

"Here," he said, "we shall be perfectly safe for the day; it is not likely that even a shepherd will enter this ravine, and if he does he is not likely to come upon us here. First, let us eat our breakfast; and then we will lie down and sleep till evening. I will keep watch if you like, but I do not think there is any occasion for it."

"Not the least," Roger agreed; "we had both better get what sleep we can: we shall have a long tramp before us to-night."

They were undisturbed during the day, and as soon as the sun set were again on their feet. The journey was a toilsome one, the country was so broken that they were continually either climbing the steep hills or descending into the valleys. After the moon had set they were forced to come to a halt for some hours, finding it impossible to climb the steep hills in the darkness. With the first light of day they were again in motion, and continued walking for some hours.

"There," Bathalda said at last, as he gained the brow of the hill, "that is the plateau-land. The town you see there away on our right is Otoman. Now we will keep due west. There are no large towns now, till we reach Tlatlanquitepec and Perote; from that point our danger will be the greatest, for all the roads across the mountains are sure to be watched. The guards at the station-houses on these roads have, no doubt, by this time had orders to look for you and arrest you, but by travelling at night we may pass them safely. We may as well enter that field of maize and lie down until evening. After that we will follow a path till we gain a main road, and then travel straight on. We can go so much faster on a road than through the fields; and I know where the post-houses are situated, so we can make a *détour* to avoid them."

That night they walked, as far as Roger could guess, fifty miles, and again entered a very hilly country. In the morning they left the road, and encamped in a wood far up the hillside. During the day they saw several parties of troops following the road, and many couriers passed along at a swift run.

"The whole country is up," Bathalda said; "we shall have to be very careful in future."

The first night, while passing through the low, hot country near the lake, Roger had cut a strong bamboo, together with a bundle of smaller rods, suitable for arrows. Bathalda had brought with him a bag of sharp obsidian arrow-heads and some feathers for winging them, together with a bowstring of twice the ordinary strength. He had looked on with amusement when Roger cut the bamboo, making it, as was the custom of English archers, of his own height.

"My lord is not intending that surely for a bow?" he said.

"Yes, Bathalda, I think that will do well," Roger said, trying with his knee the stiffness of the cane.

At the halt next day Roger had cut the notches for the string.

"Now, Bathalda," he said, "can you string this?"

"No, my lord; nor can any other man."

"I think it is about the strength of the bows we use at home," Roger said; "the stringing them is a matter of knack, as well as of strength." And, to the amazement of the Aztec, he strung the bow. "Now," said he, "let us make some arrows. They should be a cloth yard in length—that is, from the middle of my chest to the end of my middle finger."

A dozen of the light bamboos were cut to this length. The huntsman fitted the obsidian points to them, and Roger stepped back a hundred yards from the small tree, with a trunk some six inches in diameter, under whose shade they had been sitting. Then he fitted the arrow to the string, bent the bow to its head, and loosed the arrow. It struck the trunk, but glanced off.

"I am out of practice, indeed," he said, "or I should have hit that fair in the centre."

To the huntsman, however, the shot seemed well-nigh miraculous, the distance being twice as great as the Mexican bows would carry with anything like accuracy; while the speed with which the arrow flew, and the distance it went after glancing from the tree, showed that it would have been fatal at least fifty yards beyond the object aimed at. Taking the bow from Roger he fitted another arrow in and tried to bend it; but with all his efforts could only draw the arrow four or five inches.

"It is wonderful," he said, returning the weapon to Roger. "If I had not seen it done I could not have believed it."

"It is merely a matter of practice," Roger said. "My people are famous for their dexterity with the bow, and I have seen men hit a mark no bigger than the palm of my hand, ten times in succession at that distance."

The next time they halted, Bathalda made the rest of the bamboos into arrows, and making a quiver of the bark of a tree, hung them over his shoulder. Roger left his spear behind, using the bow, which he had unstrung, as a walking-staff. Bathalda offered to carry the spear, in addition to his own weapon, but Roger told him that he did not care about it.

"If it should come to a hand-to-hand fight," he said, "I would rather rely on my axe; besides, the bow, as it is unstrung, makes an excellent quarter-staff, a weapon with which I have practised a great deal. With a spear your people would know quite as much as I should, but I fancy that with a quarter-staff I should astonish them. It has the advantage, too, that it disables without killing; and as your soldiers would only be doing their duty in arresting me, I should be sorry to do them more harm than I could help. There were a great many men on the road below there to-day."

"A great many, my lord; and no doubt the garrisons of the two towns we shall have to pass to-night will be all out and on the watch. This is the most dangerous part of the journey: the mountains are rugged, and there are only certain passes by which we can travel, and they are sure to be watched narrowly. They will guess that we shall travel by night."

"I suppose it will not be possible to make a *détour* either to the south or north?"

The Aztec shook his head.

"To the north lie terrible mountains, of whose passes I know nothing. Our provisions are exhausted, and we must in future depend upon maize and other things we can pick by the way. Were we to go there we should find nothing. To the south lies Tlascala, whose people are independent of Montezuma. They are fierce and warlike, and would seize and offer you to the gods without pity."

"Still they would not be on the look out for us, and we might, therefore, pass through their country without being seen."

"We might do so, my lord," Bathalda agreed.

"At any rate," Roger said, "it seems to me that there would be more chance in that direction than in going straight forward; from what you say it seems well-nigh impossible for us to get through the passes ahead of us without being captured."

Accordingly, when night fell they struck off to the south. The journey was a very toilsome one, for they were now crossing the spurs of the hills running far down into the plateau. As before, they had to halt when the moon set, but continued their way at daybreak.

"There is a road down in the valley there," Roger said, after three hours' more walking.

Bathalda stood looking down for some time. "I know it now," he said; "it is the last road north of Tlascala, and runs from Huejotlipan to Yxtacamaxtitlan. We are already east of Tlascala, and about fifteen miles from Yxtacamaxtitlan. If we get past that town without accident, we shall then have to cross the Pass of Obispo, over the great range of mountains, and come down near Naulinco. Once past that town our dangers will be over, for there are few towns and villages in the Tierra Calliente. Our great danger will lie in the pass; there are but two or three roads across these mountains, and they will know that we must follow them."

"Well, we must take our chance," Roger said. "So far we

have met with no difficulties whatever, and, provided we don't come across too large a force, we ought to be able to manage to get through. I noticed there were trees right through the pass I came over; and I see the country ahead is thickly wooded. How far is the pass from where we are now?"

"About thirty miles. It is where you see that cleft in the great line of hills."

"Well, we can get near it before the moon sets, and will try to pass through by daylight. It would be useless attempting to make our way through the trees at night, and if we have to fight I would rather do so in the light. We will lie down now, for I own I am completely tired out."

CHAPTER XI.

CORTEZ.

THE expedition, whose arrival had caused such excitement in Mexico, was commanded by Hernando Cortez, a man who united in his person all the gifts requisite for a great leader of men. He possessed a handsome person, great strength and skill at arms, extraordinary courage and daring, singular powers of conciliation and of bringing others to his way of thinking; pleasing and courteous demeanour; a careless and easy manner which concealed great sagacity and wisdom, an inexhaustible flow of spirits, and an iron determination. Born in Estremadura in 1485, of an ancient and respectable family, he was—like many others who have distinguished themselves as great soldiers—while at school and college remarkable rather for mischievous freaks and disregard of authority than for love of learning.

At the age of seventeen he had exhausted his parents' patience, and was on the point of starting with the expedition of Ovando, the successor to Columbus, when he so injured himself by a fall, incurred in one of his wild escapades, that he

was unable to sail with it. Two years later, however, he went out in a merchant vessel to the Indies. On reaching Hispaniola, Ovando, who was governor of the island, received him kindly, gave him a grant of land, and a number of Indians to till it. The quiet life of the planter, however, little suited the restless young fellow; and after taking part in several military expeditions against insurgent natives, under the command of Diego Velasquez, he sailed in 1511 with that officer to undertake the conquest of Cuba.

He displayed great courage and activity during the campaign, and his cheerful manner and fund of high spirits made him a great favourite with the soldiers. When the fighting was over Cortez soon became discontented with the quiet life in the island, and joined a party of men who were disaffected to Velasquez, owing to their not having received such rewards as they considered their services merited. Cortez undertook to carry their complaints to the Governor of Hispaniola, and was about starting when the matter came to the ears of Velasquez, who seized him, put him in irons, and threw him into prison. He was not long in making his escape, and sought sanctuary in a church; but a few days later, when carelessly strolling outside its walls, he was again seized and imprisoned.

He was put on board a ship to be sent to Hispaniola, there to be tried for exciting disaffection and revolt; but at night, before she set sail, he managed to free himself from his irons, gain the deck, and swim ashore, where he again took refuge in the church. Here several influential people interfered on his behalf—among them the family of Catalina Xuares, a young lady to whom he was engaged—and a reconciliation was brought about between him and the governor. Cortez received a large estate, with an ample number of Indians for its cultivation, married, and settled down, and for some years devoted himself to agriculture and gold-mining.

Success attended him, and he accumulated some three thousand *castalanos*—a considerable sum. So he might have lived and died, had not the news of discoveries made by Grijalva—who had sailed west and discovered Yucatan, and traded with

Tabasco, and had returned with a good deal of gold and wonderful tales of fabulous wealth existing in a great nation farther to the north—caused an excitement in the islands. The governor at once prepared to fit out a large expedition, and among the many who offered to undertake its command, and to contribute largely towards its expenses, he finally selected Cortez, who had gained the ear and influence of the governor's secretary, Duero, and the royal treasurer, Lares. Cortez was appointed captain-general of the expedition, and at once set to work with his accustomed energy to gather material for it. He not only contributed all the fortune he had made, but raised funds by mortgaging his estates to their full value, and by borrowing money from merchants and others, on security of the wealth that was to be acquired by the expedition.

His personal popularity in the island enabled him to gather numerous recruits, and many of his intimate friends who joined him assisted him from their own resources or by raising money on their estates. Velasquez himself contributed comparatively little towards the expenses, which were almost entirely borne by Cortez and his friends. Six ships were fitted out, and three hundred recruits enrolled. The instructions Cortez received were first to find Grijalva, and, joining company with him, to visit Yucatan, and endeavour to rescue six Christians who were reported as still living there, the survivors of a vessel wrecked years before on the coast.

He was to make a survey of the whole coast-line, to acquaint himself with the natural productions of the country, and with the character and institutions of the native races. He was to barter with the natives and to treat them with kindness and humanity, and to remember above all things that the object the emperor had most at heart was the conversion of the Indians. He was to invite them to give in their allegiance to the king, and to send such presents as would ensure his favour and protection. The governor gave no directions for colonizing or conquering, having received no warrant from Spain that would enable him to invest his agent with such powers.

But while Cortez was preparing to start, many of the leading men of the island who were jealous of his rapid rise, roused the suspicions of Velasquez against him, saying that when he had once sailed he would no longer recognize the governor's authority, and would be thinking only of winning renown and wealth for himself.

Velasquez determined to appoint another commander, but Duero and Larcs, to whom he confided his intentions, at once informed Cortez of them. With the same promptitude that always distinguished him in moments of danger, Cortez went round to his officers after nightfall, got them and his men on board, visited the contractor, carried off all his stock of meat, giving him a massive gold chain in security for payment, and before daybreak the fleet left its moorings and the sails were hoisted. As soon as the news was carried to Velasquez he hurriedly dressed and rowed down to the shore. Cortez, when he saw him, got into a boat and rowed to within speaking distance.

"This is a courteous way of taking leave, indeed!" the angry governor said.

"I was pressed for time," Cortez replied. "There are some things that should be done even before they are thought of. Has your Excellency any orders?"

Velasquez saw by the innuendo in the words of Cortez that the latter was aware of his intention to deprive him of his command. He had no orders to give, for it was evident that Cortez would not obey them; the latter therefore returned to his vessel and the fleet instantly set sail for the port of Macaca. This was in November 1516.

The act of Cortez was doubtless one of insubordination; but, after he had embarked the whole of his resources in the expedition, and had received the command from the governor, this being ratified by the authorities of Hispaniola, it could hardly be expected that he would submit to disgrace and ruin being brought, not only upon himself, but upon all the friends who had aided him in the enterprise. At Macaca, Cortez laid in some more stores, and then sailed for Trinidad, an important

town on the southern coast of Cuba. Here he issued proclamations inviting recruits to join him. These came in in considerable numbers, among them a hundred men from Grijalva's ship, which had just before reached the port.

What was still more important, several cavaliers of high family and standing joined him : among them the Alvarados, Olid, Avila, Velazquez de Leon (a near relation of the governor), and Sandoval. He purchased at Trinidad large military stores and provisions. While he was taking these and other steps to strengthen his position, Verdugo, the commander of the town, received letters from Velasquez ordering him to seize Cortez ; but upon his communicating these orders to the principal officers of the expedition they pointed out to him that if he attempted to take such a grave step, the soldiers and sailors would certainly resist it, and the town would not improbably be laid in ashes. The expedition then sailed round the island to Havana, where Cortez completed his preparations ; and, in spite of another ineffectual attempt of Velasquez to detain him, set sail.

In the time that had intervened between the inception of the expedition and its departure, the historians agree that a remarkable change had come over Cortez. He was still frank and pleasant in his manner, courteous and cheery with all ; but he was no longer the gay, careless character who had been liked, but scarcely greatly respected, in the island. His whole actions were marked by an air of resolute determination and authority ; he himself superintended every detail of work and exhibited a thoughtfulness, prudence, and caution that seemed alien to his former character. He was immensely popular both among his soldiers and officers, but all felt that he was entitled to their respect as well as their liking, and that he was not only commander, but thoroughly master, of the expedition.

Although extremely careless himself as to food, comfort, or appearance, he now assumed the state befitting his appointment and authority. He dressed handsomely but quietly, appointed officers and domestics for his household, and placed it on the footing of a man of high station. Before sailing he despatched

a letter to Velasquez, begging him to rely on his devotion to his interests. On February 10th, 1519, the expedition started. It consisted of eleven vessels, only one of which was as large as a hundred tons; of a hundred and ten sailors, five hundred and fifty-three soldiers, and two hundred Indians of the islands. There were ten heavy guns and four light ones, and sixteen horses.

Before sailing, Cortez gave an address to his soldiers, and aroused their enthusiasm to the utmost. He had the advantage of obtaining the services as chief pilot, of Alaminos, a veteran who had acted as pilot to Columbus on his last voyage, and to Grijalva in his late expedition. Soon after they started they met with a storm, and put in at the island of Cozumal; and Cortez thence sent Ordaz to Yucatan to try to recover the captives said to be there. That officer returned without tidings, but before the fleet sailed a canoe arrived containing one of them, Aquilar, who had been wrecked there eight years previously. He had been a priest, and had so won the esteem and reverence of the barbarians among whom he lived that they had with great reluctance allowed him to depart in exchange for glass beads and other trinkets promised by Ordaz.

The fleet now sailed along the coast of Yucatan, until they reached the mouth of the Tabasco River, where Grijalva had carried on so profitable a trade. Leaving the ships at anchor they ascended the river in boats; but instead of meeting with the friendly reception that Grijalva had done, they found the banks lined with the natives whose menacing attitude showed that a landing would be opposed. After solemnly summoning them to surrender, Cortez landed. The natives fought bravely; but were unable to resist the astounding effect of the Spaniards' fire-arms; and the invaders, advancing, drove them back and took possession of the town, which was found to be deserted.

Two strong parties were sent out next morning to reconnoitre, but were attacked and driven back to the town; they reported that the whole country was under arms. Cortez was much vexed at finding himself thus engaged in a war, from which no benefit was to be gained; but he felt that it would

impair the confidence of his troops were he now to draw back. He, therefore, landed six of the guns and the horses, and the following day sallied out to the attack. Ordaz commanded the infantry, while Cortez himself led the little body of cavalry, the horses being mounted by the cavaliers of the party.

After marching a league the infantry came in sight of the enemy. The natives attacked them as they were struggling through deeply irrigated ground, poured volleys of missiles of all kinds upon them, and wounded many before they could get across to solid ground, where they could bring the guns into play. But even these and the discharges of musketry did not appal the natives, who pressed forward with such fury that, after the engagement had lasted an hour, the position of the Spaniards became perilous in the extreme. But at this moment Cortez and his companions, who had been compelled to make a great *détour*, owing to the difficult nature of the ground, fell suddenly upon the rear of the enemy. The latter, who had never before seen horses, and who believed that horse and rider were the same animal, were seized with a sudden panic at this extraordinary apparition. The panic speedily communicated itself to the whole army, and while the cavalry trampled down and slaughtered many in the rear the infantry charged, and the Indians fled in wild confusion.

Great numbers had fallen, whilst on the Christian side a few only were killed, and a hundred wounded. No pursuit was attempted. Cortez released the prisoners taken in battle, among whom were two chiefs, and sent them to their countrymen, with a message that he would forgive the past if they would at once come in and tender their submission; otherwise he would ride over the land and put every living creature to the sword. The Tabascans, cowed by the dreadful thunder weapons, and by the astounding armed creatures that had fallen upon them, had no wish for further fighting, and the principal caciques soon came in with offerings to propitiate the Spaniards.

Among these were twenty female slaves—one of whom turned out a more valuable gift to the Spaniards than all the

other presents put together. Among the gifts were only a few small gold ornaments, and when asked where the metal was procured they pointed to the north-west and said Mexico. As there was nothing to be done here, the Spaniards prepared to depart; but before doing so insisted on the people consenting to become Christians. As they had but little idea of what was required by them, and were in no mood for argument with the Spaniards, a solemn Mass was held, at which the whole people became nominally Christians. Re-embarking, the Spaniards sailed along the coast, until they reached the island of San Juan de Uloa, and anchored in the strait between it and the mainland. A canoe speedily came off from the latter with presents of fruit and flowers, and small gold trinkets, which the natives willingly bartered with the Spaniards.

Cortez was, however, unable to converse with them, for Aquilar, who had acted as interpreter with the Tabascans, was unable to understand their dialect. Presently, however, the female slaves informed him that one of their number, named Malinche, was a native of Mexico, and spoke that language as well as the tongue of the Tabascans. She was at once installed as interpreter—she informing Aquilar what the Mexicans said, and he interpreting it to Cortez. By this means he learned that the Indians were subjects of the great Mexican Empire, which was ruled over by a monarch named Montezuma, whose capital lay seventy leagues from the coast.

A strong force at once landed on the mainland and threw up a fortified camp. The Mexicans came in in crowds with fruit, vegetables, flowers, and other articles, which they bartered with the Spaniards. They brought news that the Mexican governor of the province intended to visit them the next day. Before noon he arrived with his numerous suite. A banquet was served to them, and then, in answer to the cacique's inquiries as to the objects of their visit, he was informed by Cortez that he was the subject of a great monarch beyond the seas, who ruled over a vast empire; and that, hearing of the greatness of the Mexican Emperor, he had sent him as an envoy with a present in token of his good will, and a message which

he must deliver in person. The cacique said that he would send couriers with the royal gift to Montezuma, and that as soon as he had learnt his will he would communicate it.

He then presented ten slave-loads of fine cottons, mantles of rich feather-work, and a basket filled with gold ornaments, to Cortez, who then handed over the presents intended for Montezuma. These consisted of a richly carved and painted armchair, a crimson cap with a gold medal, and a quantity of collars, bracelets, and other ornaments of cut glass. Cortez observed one of the cacique's attendants busy sketching, and found that he was drawing the Spaniards, their costumes, and arms. This was the picture-writing of the Aztecs, and the chief informed him that the pictures would be sent to Montezuma.

In order to impress the monarch Cortez ordered the cavalry to manœuvre, and the cannon to be fired, and these exhibitions as well as the ships were faithfully depicted by the artist. The chief then took his leave. Eight days later an embassy arrived from Montezuma, with an enormous quantity of extremely valuable presents—shields, helmets, cuirasses, collars and bracelets of gold, crests of variegated feathers sprinkled with pearls and precious stones, birds and animals in excellent workmanship in gold and silver, curtains, coverings, and robes of the finest cotton of rich colours, interwoven with marvellous feather-work.

Among the presents were two circular plates of gold and silver, as large as cart-wheels—the value of the silver wheel was estimated at five thousand pounds, that of the gold one at fifty-five thousand. The Spaniards were astounded at this display of treasure, and delighted at the prospect it opened to them. The ambassadors, however, brought a message from the emperor, saying that he regretted much that he could not have a personal interview with them, the distance from his capital being too great, and the journey beset with difficulties and dangers; and that all that could be done, therefore, was for them to return to their own land with the proofs thus afforded of his friendly disposition.

Cortez was much mortified by the refusal, but requested the envoys to lay before the emperor his immense desire for a personal interview with him, and that the dangers of a short land journey were as nothing to one who had accomplished so long a voyage over the sea to see him. The Mexicans repeated their assurance that his application would be unavailing, and left with some coldness of manner. The effect of their displeasure at the insistence of the Spaniards was soon manifest, the natives ceasing to bring in provisions.

While awaiting the emperor's reply the soldiers suffered greatly from the heat and the effluvia from the neighbouring marshes. Thirty died, and as the anchorage was exposed to the northern gales, Cortez decided to sail north as soon as the answer to his last application was received, and sent off two vessels to see where a safe port could be found. Ten days after the departure of the envoys they returned with a large quantity of fresh presents, but with a positive refusal on the part of the emperor to allow them to advance near the capital, and a request that, now they had obtained what they most desired, they would at once return to their own country. Four days later the ships returned with the news that they had found but one sheltered port, and that the country round it was well watered and favourable for a camp.

The soldiers, however, were now growing discontented: the treasure already acquired was large, the unhealthiness of the climate had alarmed them, and the proofs of the wealth and greatness of the Mexican Empire had convinced them that it needed a vastly larger force than that which Cortez had under his orders to undertake an expedition against it; for the courage showed by the Tabascans had proved conclusively that, ill armed as they were, the natives were not to be despised. Fortunately for Cortez five Indians made their appearance in camp one morning; their dress and appearance were wholly different from those of the Aztecs, and they spoke a different language, but Malinche—who had been baptized, and christened Marina, by Father Olmedo, the leading priest of the expedition—found that two of them could converse in Aztec. They said

that they were Totonacs, and had come from Cempoalla, their capital; they had been but recently conquered by the Aztecs, and were so oppressed by them that they were anxious to throw off their yoke, and they came to ask the wonderful strangers of whom they had heard to visit them.

Cortez at once saw the immense importance of the communication. Hitherto he had regarded the Mexican Empire as a great and united power against which success with so small a force was impossible; but now that he saw it was composed of subjugated peoples, many of whom would gladly ally themselves with him against their conquerors, the enterprise wore a far more hopeful aspect. He dismissed the Indians with presents, and a promise to visit their country shortly. He talked the matter over with his principal friends, who were as reluctant as he was himself to abandon the enterprise and return to Cuba, where the governor would appropriate the largest share of the spoils they had taken. They accordingly went about among the soldiery, urging them to persuade the general to establish a permanent colony in the country; it was true that he had no authority from Velasquez to do so, but the interests of the emperor and of Spain—to say nothing of their own—were of more importance than those of the Governor of Cuba.

This talk reached the ears of the special friends and adherents of Velasquez, who, going to Cortez, remonstrated with him against such proceedings. He said that nothing was farther from his desires than to exceed his instructions, and on the following morning issued a proclamation to the troops ordering them to prepare for embarkation. The sensation caused among the troops was great, and his partisans thronged round his tent calling upon him to countermand his orders and form a settlement. Cortez after due hesitation gave in to their wishes, nominated magistrates, and proclaimed the territory a colony of Spain. As soon as the new magistrates and officers came together, Cortez came before them and tendered his resignation of his office as captain-general, but was re-nominated not only captain-general but Chief Justice of the colony.

The partisans of Velasquez were most indignant at the whole proceedings, and so violent were some of the leaders, that Cortez put them in irons and sent them on board ship. Then he set to work with the soldiers, and soon brought them round; and the prisoners on board being also won over, the whole army re-embarking sailed up the coast until they reached the port before discovered, and landing, set out for Cempoalla. They were delighted with the country, which was rich and fertile; and as they neared the town the natives poured out with lively demonstrations of welcome, the women throwing garlands of flowers round the necks of the soldiers. They were greatly struck with the town, although it was but a small place in comparison with those they were afterwards to see. Cortez lost no time in sending off a vessel to Spain with despatches to the emperor; and his influence over the soldiers was so great, that they, as well as the officers, relinquished all their shares of the treasure they had gained, in order that a worthy present should be sent home to their monarch.

In his despatches Cortez related all that had befallen them, dilated on the prospect of annexing so rich a country to the Spanish dominions, and asked for a confirmation of his acts and for an authorization for the magistrates of the new town, which was called Villa Rica de Vera Cruz.

The ship touched at Cuba, but continued its voyage before Velasquez, who was furious at the news of the important discoveries made by Cortez, could stop it. Scarcely had the ship sailed when Cortez discovered that a conspiracy was on foot among the partizans of Velasquez, to seize one of the vessels and to sail away to Cuba. The conspirators were seized, two of them executed and others flogged, but the discovery that there were a number of timid spirits in the camp, who might seriously interfere with his plans, greatly annoyed Cortez, and he took the extraordinary resolution of destroying all the ships. Through some of his devoted friends he bribed the captains of the vessels to fall in with his views; and they appeared before him and made a solemn report that the ships were worm-

eaten and unfit for sea. Cortez pretended great surprise, and ordered everything movable to be brought ashore and the ships to be sunk.

Nine vessels were so destroyed, and but one small craft was left afloat. When the news reached the troops at Cempoalla they were filled with consternation. It seemed to them that nothing but destruction awaited them, and from murmurings they broke out into mutiny. Cortez, however, as usual, speedily allayed the tumult. He pointed out that his loss was the greatest, since the ships were his property, and that the troops would in fact derive great advantage by it, since it would swell their force by a hundred men, who must otherwise have remained in charge of the vessels. He urged them to place their confidence in him, and they might rely upon it that success would attend their efforts. If there were any cowards there, they might take the remaining ship and sail to Cuba with it, and wait patiently there until the army returned, laden with the spoils of the Aztecs. The troops at once returned to their duty, and declared their readiness to follow him, wheresoever he would. Without further delay, Cortez, taking with him a number of natives to act as carriers, set out on his march towards Mexico.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FUGITIVES.

AT nightfall Roger and his guide continued their journey; but now moved with great caution, keeping but a short distance from the road. Several times they saw fires burning, and had to take long *détours* to avoid them. Consequently the moon had set when they were still more than ten miles from the pass. Next morning they continued their journey, avoiding as much as possible crossing tracts of cultivated land; and when forced to do so, lying down and crawling between the rows of the maize or yuccas.

"They are sure to have scouts high up on the mountain-side," Bathalda said; "and they thence can look down upon all these fields; and although, as we cross them we are perfectly hidden from people standing on the same level, they can see us clearly enough from there."

"The distance is very great to make out a man."

"The air is very clear, my lord, in these mountains; and a figure can be seen a vast distance off. However, we can do nothing but what we are doing, and must take our chance."

"If we are attacked," Roger said, "we must make straight up the mountains. Steep as they may be there are few places where active men cannot climb, and numbers would avail nothing if we once got up among those heights."

They were now mounting rapidly towards the pass. The country was still thickly wooded, but Bathalda said that in the narrowest part of the pass there were no trees, and it was here that the danger would be greatest. As they neared the mouth of the gorge they moved with the greatest care, keeping their eyes in every direction. Presently Bathalda stopped and held up his hand. Roger listened.

"They are coming behind us," Bathalda said; "they must have made us out in the distance, and have sent a party down the road to enter the wood behind us, and so prevent us from retreating."

"Then we had better bear away to the left, Bathalda. They are sure to be in force in the pass; and since they are behind us also, our only hope is to try and scale the hill to the left."

Bathalda, without a word, moved forward in the direction indicated. The trees grew thinner in front, and through them they could see rocky ground rising steeply up. They issued out and began to climb, when the sound of a horn rose loudly in the air, and a moment afterwards a number of men were seen running from the right along the edge of the trees.

"They will not shoot," Roger said, "they want to take me alive. Never mind their arrows, it is a question of legs at present."

The rocks were extremely steep, and in many places they had to use their hands as well as their feet in making the ascent. The Aztecs, who had on first seeing them broken into loud cries, were now silent, and were toiling up the hillside in pursuit.

"Now," Roger said, after a very severe piece of climbing, "we must stop them."

He strung his bow, and placing an arrow to the string shouted to the Aztecs that he should shoot unless they desisted from pursuit. They paid no attention, their officer shouting to them to press on. They were now less than a hundred yards behind; Roger drew his bow to the fullest, and the arrow whizzed through the air. It struck the officer in the throat, and he fell prone. A cry of astonishment broke from the soldiers; however they did not hesitate a moment, but pushed on with loud shouts. Roger discharged six arrows in rapid succession, and five of them flew true to the mark. The Aztecs paused, the distance to which the arrows were sent and the accuracy of the shooting struck them with consternation, and it was evident to them that before they could climb the steep ascent, the greater portion of them would be shot down. Some took shelter behind rocks and began to discharge their arrows, others fell back in haste.

"Now we will be moving on again, Bathalda," Roger said; "we have taught them a lesson of caution."

They proceeded on their way until they reached a shoulder which led straight up the mountain. Just as they stopped to draw breath there was a shout, and a party of twenty men, who had evidently climbed straight up from the pass to cut them off, rushed at them. Roger rapidly discharged five arrows into the midst of them, and then slipped the string from the notch and seized the bamboo as a quarter-staff. At the order of their leader the Aztecs threw down their spears and flung themselves on him, with the intention of dragging him to the ground; but making his quarter-staff swing round his head, he brought the ends down upon them with tremendous force, striking them to the ground as if they had been ninepins.

Bathalda seconded him well by guarding him from attack behind. Finding that in spite of his efforts he could not keep back his assailants, Roger threw down the quarter-staff and seized his axe. Four more of them fell, cloft through the head, and then four of them sprang upon him together, but Roger's practice in Devonshire wrestling now stood him in good service; and although in a moment the four were hanging upon him they could neither get him off his legs, nor hold his arms, and he beat three of them down with heavy blows on their faces, while Bathalda freed him from one on his back by a thrust with his spear. Roger again caught up the axe, which he had let fall to have the use of both of his fists, but the fight was over. The five Aztecs still remaining on their feet appalled at the, to them, supernatural strength of their gigantic foe, fled to join their comrades, who had now nearly reached the crest on which the combat had taken place.

"Come on, Bathalda," Roger exclaimed, "we have not a moment to lose. They will shoot now, seeing that they have little chance of taking me alive." And they accordingly started up the steep ascent as rapidly as their breathless condition would allow. Their pursuers paused a moment on gaining the brow to get their wind, and then followed; but as soon as the ground again became too steep to allow of rapid movement, Roger turned, and betaking himself to his bow and arrows speedily checked the pursuit, the Aztecs being unable to stand against these terrible weapons, whose force and accuracy seemed to them supernatural. The sight, too, of the heap of their comrades lying on the slope, had greatly cooled their courage; their officers had all fallen under Roger's arrows, together with most of their bravest comrades, and although the rest still continued the pursuit, it was at a distance that showed that they had no intention whatever of closing again.

Paying no further heed to them, Roger and his companion now directed their whole attention to the work of climbing. At times they came on perpendicular precipices,

and had to make long *détours* to surmount them. After some hours' labour they reached the snow; they were now near a shoulder between two lofty peaks, and after an hour's climbing stood on its crest. The Aztecs were now mere spots far behind them.

"They will be an hour before they are here," Roger said; "we need fear no more trouble with them. It was a sharp fight while it lasted, Bathalda."

These were the first words they had spoken beyond a momentary consultation, now and then, as to the best mode of surmounting difficulties.

"My lord is wonderful," the hunter said. "Never did I see such strength and skill; it was like a mountain tiger attacked by jackals."

"You did your share too, Bathalda; your spear rid me of several of them."

"I did what I could, my lord; but that was little enough. A few men like you would defeat an army."

"Well, Bathalda, now we will be moving on again. We will keep straight down this slope, until we are off the snow, for they can follow our footsteps. Beyond that we must press on until we get into the woods again, and there we can turn right or left as we please, and throw them off the scent altogether. We shall then be safe until we leave the forest, and begin to descend into the hot country."

Another hour, and they had left the snow behind them, and after two more hours on the rocky hill-side they again entered a forest. As soon as they were well among the trees, they turned to the right again, and after travelling through the wood for two or three miles they halted, secure now against any search on the part of their pursuers. Just before halting they had the good luck to come across a small bear, which Roger wounded with an arrow, and his companion dispatched with his spear. Bathalda speedily made a fire by rubbing two sticks together, and after skinning the bear cut it up; and while Roger was superintending the roasting of some pieces over the fire, Bathalda searched in the wood, and

speedily returned with some roots, which he placed in the ashes, and which turned out excellent eating with the bear's flesh.

As it was now far on in the afternoon, and as they had already performed a very fatiguing day's work, they resolved to wait where they were until the morning.

"What do you think would be our best course, now?" Roger asked after they had eaten their meal, and were stretched close to the fire for warmth—for at this elevation the cold was great. Bathalda did not reply, but sat pouring out volumes of smoke from the pipe he had just filled. At last Roger repeated the question.

"I am ready to go where my lord wills."

"Yes, Bathalda; but that is no answer to my question. You know the ways of your people, and I do not. We have had a sharp fight with them to-day. What is likely to come of it?"

Bathalda shook his head. "The news will long before this have been sent by swift runners to every town and village on this slope of the mountains. The garrisons of Perote, Tlatlauquitepec, Xalapa, and Naulinco will all be in movement. Naulinco is but some eight or ten miles away down the pass; and not only the soldiers, but every man in the town will be ordered out. They will be posted as thick as blades of grass at the mouth of every valley leading down from the mountains. You have resisted the emperor's officers and have killed numbers of his soldiers. They will know that the wrath of Montezuma will be terrible if they fail to arrest you."

"Then you think that it will almost be impossible to make our way through them?" Bathalda nodded his head. "And in time, I suppose, they will search these woods?"

"Every foot of them, wide though they are, my lord."

"Then what is your advice, Bathalda?"

"It depends whether my lord's mind is altogether set upon joining the white men of the sea at once."

Roger in turn was silent for a time. The Spaniards would have learnt the wealth of the land, it was not likely they would speedily depart, but if they did it would only be to

return again in far greater force than at present. Other opportunities would occur for rejoining them, and it would be folly to throw away his life and that of his companion in an attempt that the latter evidently felt to be desperate. He had already had proof of the vigilance of the Aztec scouts, and doubtless that vigilance would now be redoubled.

"No, Bathalda," he replied at last; "I should be content to remain in hiding for a time, and to risk the departure of the white men."

"Then, my lord, my advice is, that we retrace our steps across to the other side of the mountains. Then we will head north, avoiding the towns, and take refuge for a time in the forests, that stretch for many leagues over the mountains. There we can build a hut and hunt, there are turkeys and other game in abundance. From time to time I can go down to a town and gather news, and bring back such things as may be necessary for you. Then, when the search for you abates, we can strike down thence to the sea-coast, if the white men are still there. At any rate we can live by hunting as long as you may find it necessary to remain in concealment."

"That will be by far the best plan, Bathalda. I have no objection to a few weeks of life in the woods, and you can teach me your craft of a hunter. What do you say: shall we start back this evening?"

"If my lord is not too wearied, it would be well if we could get across the crest before morning. They will have sentries at every point, whence they can command a view of the hills; and our figures could be made out on the snow at a great distance away."

"I should have preferred a night's rest, Bathalda; but it would be foolish to lose a day, and no doubt parties will be searching the woods in the morning. We have still four hours before the sun goes down, and that should be enough to fit us for starting again."

The hunter was pleased at Roger's decision.

"Let my lord sleep at once," he said. "I will watch; I am accustomed to long journeys, and to pass my nights in search

of game; it is nothing to me. I used dry sticks for the fire, and but little smoke will have made its way through the trees. Still it may possibly be noticed, and it were best one of us should remain on watch."

Roger felt that he should never be able to make the ascent over the crest of the hill, unless he had some rest; and therefore, without argument, he wrapt himself in his cotton mantle and lay down before the fire. It seemed to him that he had but just closed his eyes when his companion touched him.

"It is time that we should be moving, my lord; the sun has just set."

"Why, it appears to me to be night already, Bathalda."

"It has been dark here for the last hour, my lord; but on the other side of the mountains the sun has but now gone down. See, the full moon has just risen in the east."

"That is so, Bathalda; and we shall have her light till morning. Well, I am ready, though I could have slept on comfortably until sunrise. Have you heard anything?"

"I have heard the sound of horns far down the hill-side, but nothing near us save animals, disturbed by the voices below, and passing up towards the rocks. I have cooked some more flesh; it is always best to make a good meal when one can; we have a rough journey before us, and the cold will be great. Fortunately the air is still; were it blowing I should say that there was less danger in waiting here than in crossing the mountain."

The meal was quickly eaten. Bathalda slung a large piece of bear's flesh over his shoulder, and they started. So bright was the moonlight that they had no more difficulty in climbing than if it had been day, and after six hours of severe toil they again came down upon the forest on the other side of the mountains. They proceeded among the trees for some little distance till they came to some very thick undergrowth, where Bathalda thought it would be perfectly safe to light a fire. This he accordingly did, as Roger said he would rather run any danger than go without a fire. In spite of the exertions they had made, they were chilled to the bone; their

clothes were stiff with the frozen moisture from their bodies, and the cotton mantles offered but small protection against the cold. A pleasant glow stole over them as the fire burnt up.

"I will watch now, Bathalda, and you shall sleep."

"I do not think that there is any danger, my lord. They believe us among the woods on the other side of the mountains, and it is not at all likely there will be any vigilant watch kept upon this side. We can both sleep without fear."

Roger was glad to hear his companion's opinion, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. When he awoke it was day; Bathalda was cooking some flesh over the embers of the fire.

"You have been asleep I hope, Bathalda?" Roger said, as he rose to his feet and shook himself.

"I have slept, my lord," the hunter said, although in fact it was not until morning began to break that he had relaxed his watchfulness.

"We will be off as soon as we have eaten. It is possible that parties may, as soon as it is daybreak, go along by the edge of the snow-line to assure themselves that we are still on the other side of the mountain; and if so, they will probably come across our footsteps—therefore we had best be moving at once."

Two long days' marches took them deep into the woods lying north of Tlatlauquitepec. Here they set to work to construct a rough hut of boughs near a mountain spring, and when this was completed they set to work hunting. Turkeys abounded. These they generally obtained by shooting them at night as they roosted in the trees, but they sometimes hunted them by day, Bathalda imitating their call so accurately that they came up within easy shot of them without the least suspicion of danger. They killed several small bears, which were useful, not only for their flesh, but for the warmth of their skins at night. Once or twice they shot deer, and obtained other game in abundance. At night they frequently heard the roar of the mountain tiger. Once or twice when the sounds approached their hut, they left it and took refuge in trees, as the hunter said that even Roger's arrows would scarcely lay

these fierce beasts at once, and that when wounded they were terrible enemies.

Roger enjoyed the life much, the air was fresh and bracing, the forest magnificent in its varied foliage, and the abundance of game so great, that it needed no special exertion to keep themselves well supplied with food. Two or three times, at intervals of a week or ten days, Bathalda went down to Tlatlanquitepec with a load of turkeys and other game slung on a pole over his shoulder, and returned with maize, flour, chocolate, and *pulque*, and other articles of food; and—which was of much greater importance to Roger—news of the white strangers.

The first time he learnt that they had arrived in several floating castles, and had landed at once. The natives had received them with kindness, and the chief of that district, Teuhtlile, had on the following day had an interview with their chief. Presents had been exchanged. Five days later an embassy with many very rich gifts from the emperor arrived at the camp. They were the bearers of friendly messages from Montezuma, who, however, had declined to allow them to proceed into the country, and had requested them to leave the coast at once. The white men had sent back a message to Montezuma praying him to alter his determination, and showed no signs of obeying his orders and re-embarking on board their ships. By the orders of Montezuma's envoys, the people had now abstained from visiting the camp, or bringing in supplies.

Three weeks after, Bathalda returned from the town with the news that another embassy from Montezuma had visited the white camp with another great store of valuable presents; but that Montezuma positively prohibited them advancing towards the capital. Two days later they were visited by envoys from Cempealla, the chief town of the Totonacs, who had been lately conquered by the Aztecs, and had invited the white men to visit their city. They had accordingly marched there, and were now dwelling in this town. It was said that the Aztecs were extremely indignant at the action of the

Totonacs, and that dire vengeance would be taken upon them for daring to act in this manner without the permission of Montezuma.

The next news was, that the white men had marched farther north to Chiahuitzla, that they were founding a city there, and that they had actually seized and imprisoned a party of Aztec envoys. The white men had visited other towns, and at Cempoalla had insulted the gods, rolled the idols down from the tops of the temples, and had erected altars to their own gods there. This act had created a profound impression throughout the country; and the greatest astonishment was felt that Montezuma did not at once put his armies in motion to crush these profane and insolent strangers. A still greater sensation had been caused by the news that the Spaniards had destroyed all their floating castles, and that it was therefore evident that they intended to remain permanently in the land.

This news greatly surprised Roger; the reports were unanimous that there were at the utmost but three or four hundred of the Whites, and that the Spaniards should dream of matching themselves against the whole force of Mexico, seemed almost incredible.

"How do the white men communicate with the natives?" Roger asked.

"They have with them some slaves whom they obtained at Tabasco; among them was one who was a Mexican by race. They say that the white men speak to another white man who understands the language of Tabasco, and that he speaks to this young woman who speaks in Mexican what she is told. She is treated with great honour by the white men."

"What is her name—did you hear?"

"The natives say she is called Malinche, but the white men call her Marina."

"That is good news, indeed, Bathalda," Roger said; "for when I was at Tabasco, I knew a Mexican slave-girl of that name, and if it is the same she will befriend us."

It was nearly three weeks before Roger again obtained

news. Bathalda had injured his leg in a fall down a precipice, while stalking a deer, and was obliged to lie up in the hut for more than a fortnight. As soon as he was well enough to get about again he joined Roger in a turkey hunt, and started the next day for the city. He returned with surprising news. The white men had marched from the coast through Naulinco and the Pass of Obispo. They had been everywhere well received by the natives, who all belonged to the Totonac tribe. They had gone to Yxtacamaxtitlan, a great city, where they had stayed three days; they had then marched on towards Tlascala, the republic that had so long resisted the strength of all Mexico.

They were said to number four hundred foot and fifteen strange creatures, who were partly man and partly some fleet animal; and they had seven great black tubes that made thunder. Thirteen hundred Totonac fighting men accompanied them, and a thousand porters to drag the tubes and carry their baggage. They had sent embassies to the Tlascalans, but the latter had chosen war, and there had been some terrible battles fought. But the white men were invincible, and had defeated the Tlascalans with great slaughter; and the news had arrived only that morning that they had captured the city. The sensation throughout the country was that of stupefaction. It seemed absolutely incredible that a state which had successfully defied the armies of Montezuma and his predecessors should, after four or five days of fighting, be overthrown by this handful of white strangers. There seemed but one comfort; it was said that several of the Whites had been killed, and this showed, at least, that they were not superhuman creatures, and that it might yet be possible to destroy them.

No sooner did Roger hear the news than he determined to start at once to join the Spaniards, who were already far to the west. Accordingly, the next morning at daybreak, he started with Bathalda, and late on the following afternoon arrived in sight of Tlascala. They thought it better not to enter the city until the following morning, and therefore passed the night in a clump of bushes. The next day they

boldly entered the town. The city was a large one, divided into four quarters, separated by lofty walls and each ruled over by one of the four great chiefs of the republic. Its population was very large, and the town was strongly and solidly built. At ordinary times the appearance of two seeming Aztecs in the streets would have been the signal for their instant destruction, but at the present time the people were solely occupied with the presence of their white conquerors, with whom, as Roger soon learnt, they had made treaties of friendship and whom they now viewed as friends and allies.

The whole of the Spaniards were lodged in one of the palaces. The crowd of people proceeding in that direction was a sufficient index to its position; and Roger and his companion, joining the throng, were soon in front of the palace. Some Spanish soldiers were standing as sentries at its gate, but none came out or mixed with the people—Cortez having given the strictest orders that they should remain in their quarters, as he feared that did they go abroad some brawl might arise between them and the inhabitants, and so break the newly-formed alliance, which was of the most extreme importance to them. Presently some Spanish officers and several richly dressed chiefs came out from the palace. The people raised a shout, and it was evident to Roger that in spite of the terrible losses suffered by their troops in the attacks upon the white men, their admiration for their visitors far outweighed any animosity for the defeats inflicted upon them.

Near the officer whom Roger judged to be the leader of the expedition were an elderly man and a young woman. The Spaniard addressed the old man, who spoke to the girl, and she translated it to the chiefs. Roger recognized her at once—it was certainly his friend the slave-girl of Tabasco. In the eight months since he had seen her, she had grown to complete womanhood; and now—richly attired as she was, and evidently regarded as a person of great importance, both by the Spaniards and the native chiefs—carried herself with an air of confidence and pride; and was, Roger thought, the most beautiful woman he had seen in Mexico.

As the party moved down the steps of the palace and along the street, evidently discoursing on some important business, Roger followed them closely. He waited until Malinche happened for a moment to be at the outside of the party, then he pressed forward and said to her:

"Malinche, do you remember your white friend?"

She looked up, and would have cried out with astonishment, had he not touched his lips.

"I want to speak to you alone first. Where can I meet you?"

"In an hour I shall be able to slip away from their meal," she said; "be near the palace gate."

Roger at once fell back into the crowd, and soon took an opportunity to extricate himself from it, and to go down a side street. He and Bathalda then ascended to the top of the wall, where they were likely to be undisturbed, and waited there for an hour. They then went back to the palace. The square in the front of it was almost deserted now, for the Spaniards had retired half an hour before, and were not likely to appear again until the evening; especially as it was known that at noon there was to be a great council held in the palace. Ten minutes later Malinche appeared at the entrance. As soon as her eyes fell on Roger she raised her hand, and leaving Bathalda he at once went up to her.

The two sentinels looked with some surprise at this tall native, but as they saw that he was known to Malinche, they offered no opposition to his entering the palace with her. She led him down some corridors and then out into a garden. As soon as she saw that they were in a spot where they could not be overlooked, she turned and seized his hands and would have pressed them to her forehead, had not Roger prevented her doing so, and put her hands to his lips.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "How happy you have made me to-day! I have wondered so much how it has fared with you, and have dreamt at night so often that you were being sacrificed on the altars of the gods."

"I have thought of you very often, also, Malinche; and I

was surprised, indeed, when I heard that you—for I felt sure that it was you—were with the Spaniards, and were not only an interpreter but in high honour with them."

"But why do you not join them?" she asked. "Why do you come to me first? What can I do for you? I will take you at once to Cortez, and when I tell him that you were my friend, and were so kind and good to the slave-girl, he will welcome you most warmly."

"Yes, Malinche; but that is why I wanted to see you first alone. You remember that I told you all about the Spaniards, and how they owned the islands, and would some day surely come to Mexico; but that I belong to another white people, who are forbidden by the Spaniards under pain of death to come to these parts. They must not know that I am not of their nation. You see I cannot speak their tongue. I see that you have learnt it fast, for I saw Cortez speaking to you."

"What are we to do, then?" the girl asked with a puzzled look. "When they find that you cannot speak their language, they will, of course, see that you are not of their people."

"Yes, Malinche; but they might think that I had forgotten it. That is just where I want you to help me. If you take me to Cortez, and tell him that years ago a ship was wrecked on the coast of Tabasco, and that all were drowned except a little white boy, and that he was brought up at Tabasco, and that you were great friends with him until he was sold to some Mexican traders—they will think that I have altogether forgotten my native language. They are not likely to ask you how many years ago it is or how big I was then, and will imagine that I was quite a child, and that I belonged to a Spanish ship, for they will not dream of an English vessel having been in these parts. When you introduce me to Cortez, you must tell him that I have quite forgotten the language save a few words—for I picked up a few sentences when in their ports."

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ROGER FALLS ON HIS KNEE BEFORE CORTEZ.

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said Malinche; "for they rescued a man who had been living many years among a tribe at Yucatan, to the west of Tabasco. There were other white men living among them, though these they could not recover. You saw him by me this morning—he is an old man, a priest; and he translates from the Spanish into the Yucatan dialect, which is so like that of Tabasco that I can understand it, and then I tell the people in Mexican. There will be no difficulty at all. Cortez and the Spaniards know that I love them, and they trust me altogether, and I am able to do good to my country-people, and to intercede with them sometimes with Cortez. Now tell me what has happened since I last saw you."

Roger gave her a sketch of what had happened in Mexico, and how he had escaped by flight from being sacrificed.

"It is terrible—these sacrifices," Malinche said, shuddering. "I did not think so in the old days, but I have learned better from the Spaniards and from their priests; and I rejoice that the white men will destroy these horrible idols, and will teach the people to worship the great God and His Son. They will suffer—my heart bleeds to think how they will suffer—but it will be good for them in the end, and put a stop to rivers of blood that flow every year at their altars."

Although Roger was not imbued with the passion for conversion which animated the Spaniards, and led them to believe that it was the most glorious of all duties to force their religion upon the natives, he had been so filled with horror at the wholesale sacrifices of human victims, and the cannibal feasts that followed them, that he was in no way disposed to question the methods which the Spaniards adopted to put a stop to such abominations. But for the friendship of Cacama he would himself assuredly have been a victim to these sanguinary gods. He and his father had, like the Beggs, and many other of his friends at Plymouth—been secretly followers of Wycliffe, but they were still Catholics. They believed that there were many and deep abuses in the Church, but had no thought of abandoning it altogether. The doings of the Inquisition in Spain were regarded by all Englishmen with horror, but

these excesses were as nothing to the wholesale horrors of the Mexican religion.

He talked for some time with Malinche, and saw that she was completely devoted to the Spaniards, and regarded Cortez as a hero almost more than mortal; and was in no slight degree relieved at observing that, although ready to be friendly in every way, and evidently still much attached to him, the warmer feeling which she had testified at their parting no longer existed, but had been transferred to her present friends and protectors.

"Come with me," she said at last. "The meal will be over now. I will take you to an apartment near the banqueting-hall, and will leave you there while I tell Cortez about you, and will then lead you to him."

Seeing how confident Malinche was as to the reception she could procure for him, Roger awaited her return to the chamber where she had placed him, with little anxiety. In a quarter of an hour she returned, and beckoned him to follow.

"I have told him," she said. "It did not seem to him strange that some vessel should have been driven by the storms and wrecked here. He asked no questions as to how many years ago it was. I told him you were a young boy at the time, and have forgotten all but a few words of the language; and how when you grew to be a man you were sold to some Mexican merchants, and would have been sacrificed to the gods had you not made your escape. As I had told him before that there had been a white man living at Tabasco, who had been very good to me, he was not surprised at the story."

She took Roger to an apartment in which Cortez and several of his principal officers were standing. As Malinche had told them that he was painted and disguised as a native, they were not surprised at his appearance; although his height, which was far beyond that attained by Spaniards, somewhat astonished them. Roger approached the group, and at once fell on one knee before Cortez, took his hand and kissed it. Cortez raised him and embraced him warmly.

"I am delighted to find another of my countrymen," he said; "and all the more since Marina tells me that she knows you well, and that you were most kind and good to her."

"Señor," Roger said, in broken Spanish, "I do not understand, I have forgotten."

"You will soon recover it," Cortez said. "Tell him, Aquilar, that he will soon learn to speak his native language again."

The interpreter repeated the words to Roger in the Yucatan dialect, adding that he himself had been a prisoner for eight years among the natives, and that although a man when captured by them, had with difficulty spoken Spanish when restored to his friends; but it had now quite come back to him.

"You were but a boy when you were wrecked, Marina tells me?" Cortez said.

"Only a boy," Roger repeated, when Marina translated this to him.

"Do you remember anything of Spain?" Cortez asked.

Roger shut his eyes as if considering. "I seem to have a remembrance," he said, "of a place with many great ships. It was a city built on a rock rising from the sea. It had high walls with great guns upon them, which fired sometimes with a terrible noise when vessels came in and out."

When this was translated by Aquilar, Cortez said:—

"It was Cadiz, of course. Doubtless the ship he was wrecked in sailed from that port;" a murmur of assent passed round the other Spaniards. "Show him a cross, Aquilar; see if he remembers his religion."

Aquilar took out a cross from under his doublet, and held it out towards Roger, who, after looking at it for a moment, fell on his knees and kissed it.

"He remembers much, you see," Cortez said. "Father Aquilar, you will succeed soon in making a good Catholic of him again. Well, gentlemen, I think we may congratulate ourselves upon this new companion. Every arm is of assistance; and if he is as brave as he is big and strong he will prove a doughty comrade. Besides, he will be able to tell us

something of Mexico, although, as Marina says, he was only once at the capital. Question him, Aquilar, and find out from him whether its magnificence is as great as we hear."

Roger told all he knew of the capital, and said that although he himself could not say more than that it was a great city, he had heard that its population was nearly three hundred thousand, and that it certainly seemed to him fully three times as large as that of Tezcuco, where he said there were one hundred thousand people.

"And it stands on an island in a lake?" Cortez asked.

"There are three causeways leading to the land, each wide enough for six horsemen to ride abreast," Roger replied; "but it would be a difficult thing to force an entrance by these in the face of Montezuma's army."

"Well, gentlemen," Cortez said, "it is time for us to be going to the council. Marina, do you take your friend to my private apartment, and bid Juan furnish him with a suit of clothes, and with armour from that belonging to our friends who fell in the fights the other day. We will soon make a true cavalier of him."

As soon as Roger was equipped he went out to the steps of the palace, and presently descried Bathalda in the crowd. He beckoned to him, and taking him into the garden had a long talk with him. He would have rewarded him largely for his services, but Bathalda refused to accept anything.

"I came at my lord's orders," he said; "and am rejoiced to have been of service to one who is at once so kind, so strong, and so valiant."

"As you will. We shall have further opportunities of meeting, Bathalda. Do you now make your way back to Tezcuco. Tell your lord all that has happened, and that I am with the Spaniards, and shall accompany them if, as I believe, they go forward to Mexico; that I hope to see all my friends again before long; and that I always think of their kindness to me,"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MASSACRE OF CHOLULA.

THE Tlascalans had from the moment when they admitted themselves beaten by the Spaniards, laid aside all hostility, and had indeed accepted the alliance with enthusiasm. They had a right to be proud of their own valour, for they had resisted all the attempts of the great Aztec monarchy to conquer them, and had defeated with slaughter greatly superior forces; and that a mere handful of white men should be able to withstand their attacks day after day, and to defeat their best and hardiest troops, led by generals who had hitherto been always successful, excited their surprise and admiration in the highest degree. They were not gods, they knew, for some had been killed in the conflict, but as men they seemed to them infinitely superior in strength and courage to any that they had before heard of, and they were proud to enter into an alliance with such heroes. Moreover, they saw they would now have an opportunity of turning the tables upon their enemies of the plains.

They did not believe for a moment that Montezuma would admit the white men to his capital, and in that case there would be great battles, and perhaps much plunder to be gained; and therefore, when the Spaniards were again ready to advance, the whole fighting force of Tlascala was placed at their disposal. Cortez, however, declined to take with him so large an army; the appearance of such a force composed of the bitter foes of the Aztecs, would have combined against him the whole strength of that empire, and would have destroyed any hope that might remain of peaceful arrangements. Moreover, the difficulty of feeding so large a body of men would be great indeed; and as his authority over them would be but feeble, constant broils with the Aztecs would be the inevitable result. He, therefore, with many thanks, declined the offer, but said that he would gladly take with him a force of six thousand volunteers.

The first march was to be to Cholula, whose people had sent a warm invitation to Cortez to visit them, and Montezuma by his last envoys also requested them to journey forward by way of that city. The Tlascalans had strongly urged him to refuse the invitation: the Cholulans were, they said, a treacherous people and not to be trusted. They were bigoted beyond the people of other cities, Cholula being the holy city of Anahuac. It was here the god Quetzalcoatl had remained for twenty years on his way down to the coast, instructing the people in the arts of civilization. Here was the great temple of the god, a pyramid whose base covered forty-four acres, and whose height was a hundred and eighty feet; the platform on its summit, where the sacrifices took place, being an acre in size.

Cortez, however, decided upon visiting Cholula; he deemed the reports of the Tlascalans to be prejudiced, as there was a long-standing animosity between the two peoples, and he thought that were he to avoid visiting this important town which lay almost on his road to Mexico, it might be set down by the Aztecs to distrust or fear.

The departure from Tlascala was witnessed by the whole of the population of the state, who assembled to bid the white men farewell, and to wish them success upon their way.

A day's march took them to within a mile or two of Cholula. Here they were met by many nobles from the city, who urged them to enter it that evening; but Cortez, bearing in mind the warnings he had received, and thinking it dangerous to enter the streets of an unknown and possibly hostile city after dark, declined to move forward until morning. Seeing the hostility and distrust excited in the minds of his visitors at the sight of the Tlascalans in his camp, he ordered his allies to remain in camp when he advanced in the morning, and to join him only when he left the city on his way to Mexico.

The Spaniards as they entered Cholula were greatly struck with the appearance of the city and its inhabitants, it being a very much larger and more highly civilized place than any they had yet met with. The buildings were large and handsome,

the streets wide, the population very large, and exhibiting in their dress every sign of wealth and luxury. There was, too, a great variety among the population, for, as it was the sacred city of the empire, people from all other parts were in the habit of making pilgrimages there, and most of the towns had their own temples and establishments. So numerous were the temples, that fully two hundred towers could be counted rising above the city, with the stupendous pyramid towering above them all.

The Spaniards were quartered in the court of one of the temples and in the surrounding buildings. As soon as they were established there the principal nobles of the town paid them visits of ceremony; and presents of everything necessary for their comfort and accommodation, and stores of provisions of all kinds, poured in. Roger had in the line of march taken his place among the troops, but Cortez directed that he should at other times be near at hand to him, as he alone of those in the army had any personal knowledge of the country they were to traverse, and could give information as to the size of the towns, the nature of the roads, and the advantages which they offered respectively in the supply of provisions likely to be obtained, the facilities for getting water, etc. Cortez therefore, Father Aquilar acting as interpreter, enjoined him to ramble about the city, releasing him from all guards and exercises.

"Now that you are dressed like the rest of us," he said, "none will dream that you understand their language, and as you pass along they will express freely before you the sentiments they may entertain of us. I do not expect them to love us, and doubtless though they may flatter us to our faces they curse us heartily behind our backs. But we care nothing for their curses or for their ill-will, so long as they do not proceed to plots and conspiracies against us. They seem courteous and friendly, and I think that the Tlascalans have spoken far too strongly against them. Nevertheless we will be on our guard. These men are not like our mountain friends, who were rough fighters, but hearty and honest people.

They are traders, or nobles, or priests, accustomed to let their faces hide their thoughts, but through you we may get nearer to them than we otherwise should do.

"But go not alone. One man can easily be jostled into one of the temples and made away with without any being the wiser. I will choose two comrades for you; men of discretion, and courageous without being quarrelsome. With them, too, you will, ere long, begin to recover your mother tongue, which you will never do so long as you only talk these heathen languages with Marina and Father Aquilar." Cortez struck the table with his hand, and an attendant entered. "Summon Juan Algonos and Pedro de Gasconda."

In a minute two men entered. Juan was a weather-beaten soldier, whose face bore the marks of several deep scars, and who had fought for Spain on most of the battle-fields of Europe. Pedro was young enough to be his son; Juan had saved his life in a fight with the natives of Cuba, and since then they had been inseparable.

"Juan, I have sent for you to ask you and Pedro to take our new comrade into your party. I know you are always together, and that you are quiet and peaceable, and not given either to quarrel in your cups or to spend your evenings in gambling and dicing. He has, as you know, almost forgotten his own language, and it will be for our advantage, as well as his own, that he should learn it as soon as possible; for as he knows the country and people it is well that he should be able to communicate with the rest of us without having to hunt up an interpreter. But that is not the principal thing just at the present moment. We know not whether the people of this city mean treacherously towards us or not. They will not speak in the presence of Donna Marina or of the good Father here, knowing that they are acquainted with the language; but as they will not imagine that this tall Spanish soldier can know aught of what they say, they will not mind speaking out their thoughts before him. Therefore, while he is here it will be his duty to wander about the streets, and learn what the people are saying and what they think of us.

But here, as elsewhere, I have ordered that not less than three men shall go out together; I have chosen you to accompany him. You will be free from all other duty."

"That we will do right willingly," Juan said, "it is pleasanter to walk about the streets and look at these strange peoples than it is to be cooped up here. As to the other part of the business, we will do what we can towards teaching him Spanish, but as to being our comrade that must depend upon himself. I like the young fellow's looks much; he looks honest and straightforward, though where he got that light wavy hair and that fair skin from I can't guess—they are rare enough in Cadiz, where I heard one say that he came from."

"We don't know that he came from there, Juan; he may have come from the mountains of Biscaya, where fair skins are commoner than they are in the south. It is only that he described to us a port which must have been Cadiz as the last thing he recollected in Spain."

"Ah well, his skin matters nothing!" the soldier said. "His face is an honest one, and as to height and strength one could wish no better comrade. He is young yet, not more than nineteen or twenty, I should guess; but I will warrant that there is not a man in the expedition he could not put on his back if it came to a tussle. At any rate, we will try him; what do you say, Pedro?"

"I like his looks," the young fellow said. "At any rate we are not like to quarrel with him. As to more than that we can say better when we know more of each other."

Father Aquilar, who had listened attentively to all that had been said, explained to Roger the purport of the conversation between Cortez and the men. When he had finished, Roger held out his hand to the two soldiers and gave them a hearty grasp, expressive of his willingness to join in the arrangement that had been made.

"He will do, General," Juan said. "We will look after him; never fear."

Cortez gave orders that the three men were to be allowed to leave the quarters, and go into the town at all times without

further question, and they at once started for a turn through the streets.

"How are we to begin to teach this young chap to talk, Pedro? It is out of the regular line of duty altogether."

Pedro shook his head: "I don't know, comrade; I have heard women teaching their babies to talk; but I should hardly think that would be the way with him."

"No, no, that is quite different, Pedro; you see the little ones have not got their tongues twisted rightly, and they can't talk plain, do as much as they will, but this young fellow could say plain enough what we told him; the question is, What are we to tell him? Suppose I say to him, 'They are a curiously dressed lot of people here;' well, he might say it after me, but as he would not have an idea what we meant I don't see that we should be getting any forwarder."

Roger, however, had already gone through the work of learning the two native languages, and knew how to begin; he touched Juan's sword, and gave the Mexican word for it.

"What does he mean by that, Pedro?"

Roger repeated the action.

"Perhaps he wants to know what you call your sword," Pedro suggested.

"Perhaps it is that, I will try him anyhow: '*spada*.'"

Roger nodded, and repeated the word after him, and then touched his own helmet.

"That is what he means," Juan said, with great satisfaction; "what he has got to do is to touch things, and for us to tell him the names."

"That is capital. I had no idea teaching a language was such easy work."

However, after a few more words had been said, and a method established, Roger asked no more questions; his companions being now fully occupied in gazing at the houses, the temples, and the crowd in the streets, while he himself was busy listening to the remarks of the people.

It was curious to him, to hear everyone around freely discussing them, assured that no word they said was understood.

Had he been vain he would have felt gratified at the favourable comments passed on his personal appearance by many of the women and girls; but he put them down entirely to the fact that he differed more from them than did the Spaniards, and it was simply the colour of his hair and the fairness of his skin that seemed wonderful to the Mexicans.

"Ah!" he heard one woman say to another; "I marked that tall soldier when they came into the town this morning. They are all grand men, and look wonderfully strong and brave with their arms and armour; I know that such fighters as these were never heard of before, for have they not, few as they are, beaten the Tlascalans, who, as we all know, are good fighters, though they are little better than savages? But as to their faces they were not what I expected to see, they are lighter than ours, but they are not white. But I noted this soldier, he is just like what I expected—just like what they said the white man who has been at Mexico for some time is like."

"I am sorry for them," the girl said; "they say that Montezuma will offer them all up at the temples when he gets them to Mexico."

"Perhaps they will never get there," a man standing next to her said; "at least, unless they enter the town as captives."

"Perhaps some of them will stay here. Why should not our god have his share of victims as well as the war god of Mexico?"

The speaker was a priest, who was scowling angrily at the three Spaniards, who after stopping to look at the carving over the gate of a temple were now moving on again.

But although Roger heard occasional remarks that showed it was the opinion of the inhabitants that Montezuma had only allowed these strangers to enter his country for the purpose of destroying them, there was no general feeling of hostility to them—the satisfaction at the defeat they had inflicted upon Tlascala far outweighing any other feeling.

After wandering about for some hours, the party returned to their quarters, where Roger gave, through Malinche, to Cortez an account of what he had gathered.

"There is nothing new in that," Cortez said; "we know that Montezuma has done all in his power to prevent us from coming, and that now he knows he has wasted his treasures in vain, he must feel no good will towards us. However, we shall be prepared for him. But continue your search, there may be a change come. Montezuma may even now be preparing to crush us; if so, as soon as the people here know it, you will see a change in their demeanour. The priests are all-powerful here, and the devils whom they worship are sure to set them on to do us mischief if they can. Therefore relax not your watchfulness; Marina and yourself are the only two among us who understand their language, and it is upon you both that we have to depend to shield us from treachery. Against an open assault I have no fear, but in a crowded town like this an attack at night might be fatal."

Cortez had, indeed, taken the precaution upon his arrival of stating to the nobles, that as it would be inconvenient for Marina to reside in buildings occupied solely by men, he should be glad if one of their wives would receive her as a guest, and she was accordingly installed at once in the house of one of the principal nobles. Some days passed, as Cortez was waiting for the arrival of a fresh embassy from Montezuma. During that time Roger was unable to detect any change in the attitude of the population. The Spaniards were greeted courteously when they went abroad, and their leaders were entertained at fêtes and banquets by the nobles.

Roger and his two comrades were well satisfied with each other. Juan was a taciturn soldier, but he was amused at the efforts of Pedro and Roger to converse. "I am glad, Pedro," he said, on the third day of their making acquaintance with Roger, "that this young fellow has joined. If I had had my will, I should have said nay when Cortez proposed it; but it is good for you, lad. It is well enough for an old soldier like me to toil along all day without speaking, under a burning sun, and to say but little even over his cup of wine at the end of the march; but it is not good for a lad like you. You were getting old before your time; I could sing a song, and

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dance a measure with the best of them when I was at your age, and you see what has come of my campaigning, for, like yourself, I took to an old soldier for a comrade. This young fellow seems to have a cheerful spirit, and when he can talk our language well will be a gay companion, and will do you good. Yes, and do me good, too, Pedro. You are too apt to get into my moods, and be silent when I am silent, and thus I make you dull, while you do not make me bright. Only I want to see this young fellow at work before I quite give him my heart. I believe that he will bear himself bravely; it were a shame, indeed, if there should be faint heart in a body of such thews and muscle. Truly he is a stately figure, and has the air of the great noble rather than a rough soldier; but that, I take it, comes from his being brought up among these Mexicans, who, though in most respects ignorant, carry themselves with much dignity, and with a stately and gentlemanly manner, such as one sees in Europe chiefly in men of good blood.”

On the evening of the fourth day the embassy arrived from Montezuma. The emperor had apparently again changed his mind, for he expressed his regret at their determination to visit the capital, and begged them to relinquish the idea. Upon leaving Cortez the ambassadors had an interview with several of the chief nobles of Cholula. They left for the capital again in the night. The next morning a change was visible in the behaviour of the people. They no longer visited the Spanish quarters, but held aloof from them. The nobles upon being invited to come to see Cortez, sent in excuses on the ground of illness, or that they were about to undertake a journey, or other pretexts, and the supply of provisions sent in fell off greatly.

Roger and his comrades also marked a great difference in the manner of the people in the streets. The buzz of talking and laughing was hushed as they approached; people turned away as if desirous of avoiding the sight of them; the priests regarded them with an insolent air; on one or two occasions they were roughly jostled; and on arriving at the end of a

street the people gathered round, and by words and gesture told them to go no farther. Cortez had particularly enjoined Roger and his companions against embroiling themselves in any way with the people, and they therefore suffered themselves to be turned back without exhibiting any air of concern; but Juan muttered many oaths beneath his moustache, and Roger and Pedro had difficulty in restraining their anger.

Cortez looked very grave upon hearing Roger's report on their return. "I fear that treachery is intended," he said, "and if I did but know it, I would be beforehand with them. You had best not go abroad again, for it may be their intention to provoke a quarrel by an affray in the streets. I will send some of the Cempoallans who are with us out; they will be less observed, and may find out what is going on."

"I think," Marina said, "that if we go up to the flat roof we may see something of what is going on; this house is more lofty than most."

Cortez, with Roger and the girl, ascended to the roof; from it they commanded a considerable prospect. On some of the roofs they could make out bodies of men at work, but these were too far off to see what they were doing.

In the evening the Cempoallans returned, and said that they had come upon barricades erected across several of the streets, and that on many of the roofs great stones and beams of timber were piled; while they had discovered holes dug in the streets and covered with branches, and apparently intended to entrap cavalry.

A portion of the troops were ordered to remain under arms all night in case of attack, but the city remained quiet. In the course of the following day, some Tlascalans came in from their camp and informed Cortez they had heard that a great sacrifice of children had been offered up in one of the temples, a custom which prevailed whenever an enterprise of a serious nature was about to be undertaken. They said, too, that large numbers of the citizens with their wives and children were leaving the town by the various gates.

The situation had now become very grave, and Cortez and

his officers were at a loss to know what had best be done, as they had still no positive proof that treachery was intended. This proof was, however, furnished by Marina next day. The wife of the cacique had taken a great fancy to her, and urged her to take up her abode altogether at her house, hinting that it would be safer for her to do so. Marina at once pretended that she should be glad to leave the white men, who held her in captivity in order that they might use her as an interpreter. The Cholulan then gave her a full account of the conspiracy.

"It was," she said, "the work of the emperor; who had sent rich presents by the ambassadors to the great nobles, and had urged upon them the necessity of making an end of the white intruders. Twenty thousand troops had been marched down to within a short distance of the city, and these were to enter and take part in the assault on the Spaniards. The attack was to be made as these left the city. The streets were to be barricaded, and impediments to prevent the action of the cavalry placed in the way, and the Spaniards were to be overwhelmed with the missiles from the roofs, while the troops would pour out from the houses to the attack. Some of the Spaniards were to be sacrificed at the altars at Cholula, the rest to be marched in chains to the capital, and there put to death. This scheme was unfolded to Marina in her apartment in the Spanish quarters, and she appeared to assent to the proposal that she should that night leave the Spaniards altogether.

Making an excuse to leave the room for a few minutes, Marina hastened to Cortez and informed him of what she had heard. The cacique's wife was at once seized, and being in terror of her life she repeated the statements she had made to Marina. The news was alarming, indeed the position of the Spaniards in the midst of a hostile city seemed well-nigh hopeless—the barricades and pitfalls would paralyze the action of the cavalry and artillery, every house would be a fortress, and under such difficulties even the bravery of the handful of Spaniards would avail but little against the overwhelming force by which they would be attacked.

Before deciding as to the best course to be adopted, Cortez determined to obtain further confirmation of the story of the cacique's wife. He accordingly sent an invitation to two priests, who resided in the temple close to his quarters, to visit him. When they came he received them most courteously, but informed them that by the powers he possessed he was perfectly aware that treachery was intended. He bestowed upon them some very valuable presents from the gifts he had received from Montezuma, and promised that none should be aware that he had received any information from them. The rich bribes had their effect, and the priests confirmed the report Marina had heard.

They said that the emperor had since their arrival been in a state of vacillation, constantly consulting the oracles, and unable to make up his mind whether to fight them, or to receive them with honour. He had, when he heard that they were going to Cholula, first issued orders that they should be well received; but since then the oracles had again been consulted, and had declared that Cholula would be the grave of the white men, for that the gods would assuredly lend their aid in destroying the enemies who had dared to violate the sanctity of the holy city. He had, therefore, ordered the attack to take place in the manner described, and so certain were the Aztecs of success that the manacles to secure the prisoners, had already been sent to the city.

Cortez dismissed the priests, telling them that he intended to leave the city the following morning, and requested that they would induce the principal nobles engaged in the plot, to pay him a visit at once. As soon as the priests had left, he summoned his principal officers and disclosed to them the plot he had discovered. There was much difference of opinion between them; some were in favour of returning at once to the friendly city of Tlascala; others voted for still advancing, but by the northerly route their allies had recommended; but the majority agreed with their general, that their only chance of safety was in taking a bold course, for that retreat would raise the whole country against them and ensure their destruction.

When the nobles arrived Cortez rebuked them mildly for their altered conduct and for the failure of supplies, and said that the Spaniards would no longer be a burden upon the city, but would march out on the following morning, and requested that they would furnish a body of two thousand men to transport his artillery and baggage. As this suited admirably the designs of the natives, they at once agreed to furnish the required force. Upon their leaving, Cortez had an interview with Montezuma's ambassadors, who had accompanied him from the coast, and told them that he was aware of the treacherous plot to destroy him and his army, and that he was grieved to find that this vile act of treachery was instigated by Montezuma.

The ambassadors, astounded at what appeared to them the supernatural knowledge of Cortez, and terrified at the position in which they found themselves, made earnest protestations of their entire ignorance of the scheme, and declared that they were convinced that the emperor was wholly innocent of it, and that it was entirely the act of the Cholulans. Cortez pretended to believe them, as he was desirous as long as possible of keeping up a semblance of friendship with Montezuma, and declared that he was willing to believe that after the friendly messages and gifts the emperor had sent, he could not be guilty of such baseness and treachery, his anger therefore would be directed chiefly against the Cholulans, who were guilty not only of foul treachery to himself, but of dishonouring the emperor's name by their conduct.

As soon, however, as the ambassadors had retired, a strong guard was placed over them to prevent them from communicating with the citizens. Every precaution was taken in case the plans of the enemy should be altered, and an attack made during the night. The guns were placed so as to command the approaches. The horses were kept saddled and ready for action. Strong guards were placed, and the troops lay down in their armour. Orders were despatched to the Tlascalans, to hold themselves ready to march into the city in the morning and join the Spaniards. As soon as daylight

broke the troops were under arms. A portion of those with the guns were posted outside the building, so as to sweep the streets. A strong body were told off to guard the three gates of entrance. The rest were drawn up in the great court, which was surrounded partly by buildings, partly by high walls.

Soon after the arrangements were completed the caciques arrived, having with them a body of men even larger than they had agreed to bring. As soon as they entered, Cortez called them to him, and informed him that he was acquainted with all the particulars of the conspiracy. He had come to that city upon the invitation of the emperor, had given them no cause of complaint, and had left his allies outside the walls. Under the guise of kindness and hospitality they had prepared a snare to cut off and destroy them.

The Cholulans were astounded; it seemed to them useless to deny anything to men who could thus read their thoughts, and they confessed that the accusation was true.

Cortez raised his hand; a gun gave the signal, a terrible volley was poured into the Cholulans, and the Spaniards then fell upon them with pikes and swords. The unfortunate natives thus taken by surprise, and penned up like sheep in the enclosure, scarcely offered any resistance; some tried to escape through the gateways, but were repulsed by the troops stationed there. Others strove, but in vain, to scale the walls, and the only survivors of the massacre owed their lives to hiding under the great piles of dead.

In the meantime, the Mexicans without, being made aware by the heavy firing of the failure of their plan of surprise, rushed from the buildings in which they had been stationed, and poured up to the assault. They were swept down by the discharges of the guns, but the places of the slain were rapidly filled, and with reckless bravery they pressed up to the Spaniards, although Cortez at the head of his cavalry, charged them again and again, so as to give the gunners time to reload. The struggle was still proceeding when the Tlascalans entered the gates of the city, and coming up at a run to the scene of conflict, fell upon the rear of the Mexicans.

These could no longer resist their terrible opponents, and breaking their ranks, took refuge in the houses, or fled to the temples. One large body, headed by the priests, made a stand upon the great central *teocalli*.

There was a tradition among them that if its stones were removed, the god would pour out an inundation of water to overwhelm his enemies. The Cholulans tore down some of the stones, and when the expected miracle did not take place, were seized with despair. Many shut themselves up in the wooden towers on the platform of the summit, and poured down missiles on their foes as they climbed the great staircase; but the darts and arrows fell harmless upon the armour of the Spaniards, and when these gained the platform, they snatched up the blazing arrows shot at them, and fired the turrets. The Cholulans fought to the last, and either threw themselves over the parapet, or perished in the flames.

In the meantime, many of the wooden houses in the town had caught fire, and the flames spread rapidly. The Spanish cavalry charging through the street trampled the Mexicans under foot, while the Tlascalcan allies gratified their long enmity against the Cholulans by slaying them without mercy. When all resistance had ceased, the victors burst into the houses and temples, and plundered them of their valuables. The sack continued for some hours; and then Cortez, at the entreaties of some Cholulan caciques who had been spared at the massacre, and of the Mexican ambassadors, consented to call off his troops, and two of the nobles were allowed to go into the town and to assure the surviving inhabitants that no further harm would be done to them if they would return to their homes.

The Spaniards and Tlascalans were drawn up under their respective leaders. The division of the booty offered no difficulties. The mountaineers attached no value to gold or jewels, and were well content with wearing apparel and provisions, while to the share of the Spaniards fell the valuables taken. Cortez had given strict orders that no violence should be offered to the women or children, and his orders had been

respected, but many of these and numbers of men had been made prisoners by the Tascalans, to carry away into slavery. Cortez, however, now persuaded them to liberate their captives, and so great was his influence that they acceded to his request. The dead bodies were now collected and carried outside the city by the inhabitants.

Cortez, in his letter to the Emperor Charles, says that three thousand were slain, but most contemporary writers put down the number of victims at six thousand, and some at even a higher figure. Order was promptly restored; the inhabitants who had left the town speedily returned, and the people of the neighbourhood flocked in with supplies. The markets were re-opened, and only the lines of blackened ruins told of the recent strife. The massacre was a terrible one, and is a stain upon the memory of Cortez, who otherwise throughout the campaign acted mercifully, strictly prohibiting any plundering or ill-treatment of the natives, and punishing all breaches of his orders with great severity.

The best excuse that can be offered is, that in desperate positions desperate measures must be taken; that the plot, if successful, would have resulted in the extermination of the Spaniards; and that the terrible lesson taught was necessary to ensure the safety of the expedition. Moreover, a considerable portion of those who fell, fell in fair fight; and after the action was over the inhabitants were well treated. It must, too, be taken into consideration that the Spaniards were crusaders as well as discoverers, and that it was their doctrine that all heretics must be treated as enemies of God, and destroyed accordingly. Such was not the doctrine of their Church, for as the great historian Bede writes of King Ethelbert, "He had learned from the teachers and authors of his salvation that men are to be drawn, not dragged, to heaven."

Roger, with his two companions, had formed part of the force stationed outside the gates to resist the attack of the citizens, and he had taken his share in the fierce fighting that went on there. He was not free from the prejudices of his times, and the horrible sacrifices of the temples, and the narrow

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escape he himself had had in being offered up as a victim, had inspired him with a deep hatred of the religion of the people, although against them personally he had no feeling of hostility. Even in the height of the conflict he felt pity for the men who, in their cotton armour, rushed so fearlessly to the attack of the iron-clad Spaniards, armed with their terrible weapons. But at the same time, he knew that if they were successful, the most horrible fate awaited him and his companions; and the treacherous plot of which they had so nearly been the victims, excited the same feelings in his mind as in that of the Spaniards.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN MEXICO.

THE terrible vengeance taken by the Spaniards at Cholula struck terror into the minds of the Mexicans. The White men had shown in their conduct with the Tlascalans how terrible they were in battle, and it now seemed that treachery was of no avail against them. The cities in the neighbourhood of Cholula hastened to send messages expressive of submission to the terrible White warriors, accompanied by presents of all kinds. Montezuma saw with awe and affright that even the oracles of the gods could not be depended upon against these strangers; and that bribes, force, and treachery, had alike failed to arrest their march towards his capital. Vast numbers of victims were again offered up on the altars, but no favourable responses were returned—for the priests, seeing how complete had been the failure of their predictions as to events at Cholula, were unwilling again to commit themselves.

The emperor consequently sent fresh ambassadors laden with presents to Cortez, with assurances that he was in no way responsible for the attack upon them, and that he considered they had done well in punishing its authors.

Cortez endeavoured to induce the inhabitants of the city to embrace Christianity, and would have resorted to force here as at Cempoalla, but he was dissuaded by Father Olmedo, who, as on former occasions, urged that conversions effected by force were of little use, and that the cause would be injured rather than benefited by such measures. Christianity would as a matter of course, result from the success of the Spaniards, and that success would be imperilled by exciting the animosity of the whole people by violence to their gods. As the great *teocalli* had been captured in fair fight, and a large portion of its buildings burnt, Cortez converted a massive stone edifice that had escaped the flames into a church, and erected a gigantic crucifix on the summit of the *teocalli*, visible from all points of the city.

A fortnight after his entrance to Cholula, Cortez again began to move forward. His Cempoallan allies, who had fought with great bravery against the Tlascalans, and had rendered him immense assistance upon the march, now asked to be allowed to return home, for much as they believed in the prowess of the Whites, the dread of Montezuma's name was too great for them to dare trust themselves in his capital. Cortez dismissed them with many presents, and with his Tlascalan army set forward towards the capital. As they proceeded on their way, parties came in from various towns on the plateau with friendly messages.

The enormous taxation imposed to keep up the luxurious court of the emperor pressed heavily upon the land, and the greater portion of the inhabitants hailed with real satisfaction the coming of a power that appeared likely to overthrow the Aztec tyranny. Had it not been for this widespread disaffection, the little army of Cortez would, in spite of its bravery and superior weapons, have been powerless against the vast hosts which could have been hurled against it. But the people of the empire in general regarded Mexico as its oppressor and tyrant, and hailed the opportunity of freeing themselves from its dominations.

Cortez, except when the question of religion was concerned,

was politic in the highest degree, and inspired all the natives who came to him with the full belief that in him they would have a kind and generous protector against Montezuma. Warm as were the assurances of friendship sent by that monarch, the Spaniards were well aware that no confidence could be placed in them. Their new friends, indeed, informed them that he was already preparing for an attack upon the Spaniards, and that the straight and level road had been blocked up, in order that they might be forced to take their passage through the mountains, where they could be attacked and overwhelmed at points at which their cavalry and artillery would be unable to act.

On arriving, therefore, at the place where the roads had been blocked, Cortez caused the piled-up obstacles to be removed, and the army proceeded by the level road, where they felt confident in their power to defend themselves if attacked. Upon the march Roger sometimes kept with Juan and Pedro, at other times walked beside Malinche, who although wholly devoted to Cortez, had yet a warm and kindly feeling for her former friend. Cortez himself often consulted Roger as to the roads and places ahead, for he always received the native descriptions with some doubt, as he could not be sure whether they were honestly given.

After passing across the plateau, the little army ascended the steep range of hills separating it from the table-land of Mexico. The cold was sufficient to affect them seriously after the heat of the plains, and the difficulties of taking up the guns and their ammunition were great. This work was principally performed by the native allies, the Spaniards holding themselves in readiness to repel any attack that might be made upon them in the forest-clad hills or in the deep defiles; but no foes showed themselves, and they at last gained the western slopes whence the plains of Mexico burst into sight.

The Spaniards stood astonished—as Roger had done, on his first journey—at the beauty of the prospect; but the sight of the numerous cities, telling of an immense population, filled them with uneasiness, and a clamour presently arose that to



Map of the Valley of Mexico at the period of the Conquest.

march onward against such overwhelming odds, was nothing short of madness; and that, having accomplished such vast things, they had done sufficient for honour, and should now return with the spoils they had captured to the coast. But, as before, the enthusiasm and influence of Cortez soon reanimated their courage; he and the other leaders went among them, and by argument and entreaty persuaded them again to form their ranks and press forward; and in a short time the army wound down from the heights into the valley.

Happily for them, the ruler of Mexico was altogether dominated by superstitious fears. Against native enemies he had shown himself a resolute and valiant leader, had carried on numerous successful wars, and had by force of arms greatly extended his dominions; but against these strange White enemies his faculties seemed altogether to fail him. He had for years given himself up to the priesthood, and in this crisis, instead of consulting with his trusted generals, he was swayed wholly by the advice of the priests, and sought protection, not from the armies at his command, but from the gods whom he strove to influence in his favour by hecatombs of human victims sacrificed upon their altars.

In the month that had elapsed since he joined Cortez at Tlascala, Roger had made considerable progress in Spanish, and although incapable of supporting a long conversation with his comrades, could make himself understood in simple matters. His behaviour at the fight in Cholula had gained him the respect of the old soldier, who however, was not wholly satisfied with him.

"The young fellow is no coward," he said to Pedro. "When the Mexicans were pressing us sorely, he fought as stoutly and well as any in our ranks. He is well skilled in the use of the sword, which is wonderful, seeing that the Mexicans among whom he has been brought up are but poor hands with that weapon; and both with thrust and point he showed himself perfectly at home with the heavy blade the general gave him. I saw him pressed at one time by four Mexicans together, and was making to his assistance, but there was no need for



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it: he ran one through the body, and with heavy downright blows, well-nigh cleft the heads of two others; and the fourth, with a cry of astonishment and fear, sprang back into the crowd. But though he fought so stoutly when attacked, he showed less ardour in the assault, and lagged behind when we were pursuing the enemy."

"I like him none the worse for that, Juan," Pedro said; "he has lived among these people; and though I hear that when they heard of our landing they would have sacrificed him, and he had to fly for his life and fight hard to make his escape, he must in other respects look upon them without animosity and doubtless he felt some pity for the poor wretches."

"I felt some pity myself," Juan said; "but as they had intended so treacherously towards us, and proposed to put us all to a cruel death, I did not let my pity interfere with my sword arm."

"Ah, but you have been accustomed to battles and bloodshed all your life, Juan. One does not take to the trade of killing all at once, and I like him none the worse that he was disinclined for the slaughter of the people among whom he had been brought up."

"Well, we shall see," the old soldier grumbled; "it seems to me that when two or three hundred men are fighting against a whole nation, and that nation proposes to cut all their throats on the altars of their gods, it is not a time for scruples. I approve of the orders the general gave, that no one was to injure women and children, and I heartily wish that such were always the orders; but when it comes to men who have set their minds upon killing me I don't draw nice distinctions, and I just smite where I see a chance."

The news that the Spaniards had crossed the mountains and had entered the valley completed the dejection and despair of Montezuma; and after shutting himself up in his palace and refusing food, he at last turned from the gods, from whom he could obtain no assistance, and summoned a meeting of his counsellors. These were divided in opinion: Cacama was at

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the head of the peace party; he pointed out that had they intended to oppose the advance of the white men by force of arms the whole strength of the empire should have been despatched to dispute the passage of the mountains. As that had not been done, they should now be received in friendly fashion as the ambassadors of the great king whom Cortez claimed to represent. Some of the other counsellors led by Cuitlahua, Montezuma's brother, were in favour of turning out all the forces and repelling the invasion; but Cacama's counsel prevailed, and an embassy was despatched under his leadership to greet the Spaniards and conduct them to the capital.

The Spanish army advanced slowly. They halted for two days at Amaquemecan, where they were well received and hospitably entertained; and presented with a considerable sum in gold. They then marched forward to Ajotzinco, a town standing at the southern extremity of Lake Chalco, and partly erected on piles rising from the lake itself. Here, as at Venice, canals took the place of roads and all traffic was carried on in boats.

Upon the following morning, a messenger arrived with the news that the King of Tezcuco was approaching as an ambassador from the emperor, and in a short time the royal procession approached the city. Cacama was borne in a magnificent litter, shaded by a gorgeous canopy, and was attended by a number of nobles and officials. As the palanquin neared the spot where Cortez was standing, Cacama left his litter and advanced towards him; saluting by touching the ground with his hand and raising it in the air. Cortez also advanced and embraced the young prince, who told him that he came as the ambassador of the emperor to welcome him to his capital. An exchange of presents took place, and Cortez assured the prince of the friendliness of his intentions and of the respect he entertained for the emperor. Cacama then withdrew, and returned at once to Mexico; while the army resumed its march.

Roger did not make any attempt to approach the prince after his interview with Cortez: he knew that he would have

received from Cuitcatl the news that he had surmounted the dangers of his journey and joined the Spaniards at Tlascala, and thought that it would be better to defer presenting himself to the prince until he could do so more privately at Tezucuo. He considered it possible that Montezuma might have blamed Cacama for his escape, and that if he were to greet him it would be reported to the emperor, who might regard it as a proof that there had been a secret understanding between them, and that Cacama had aided his flight.

Crossing the causeway that divided the Lake of Chalco from that of Xochical, the army marched to Iztapalapan, a large town with a royal residence, governed by the emperor's brother Cuiclahua. The prince had assembled a number of the great nobles, and Cortez was received with great state and ceremony; and after the usual presentation of gifts a banquet was served to the Spaniards in one of the great halls of the palace. After this Cortez was conducted over the gardens, which were the finest in Mexico. They contained all the vegetable productions of the empire, with magnificent aviaries and a fish-pond built of stone nearly a mile in circumference.

At daybreak next morning, that of November 8th, 1519, the Spaniards were mustered and again set forward. The four hundred White troops led the way. They were followed by the baggage, after which came what was numerically the main portion of the army, six thousand five hundred Tlascalan soldiers. Keeping on by the shore of the lake, and crossing the narrow strip of land dividing the Lake of Xochical from that of Tezucuo, they arrived at the head of the great causeway running across the lake to the island on which the capital was built. The causeway was a massive construction built of large stones laid in cement, and was wide enough to permit of ten horsemen riding abreast.

The shores of the lake on either side were closely dotted with towns and villages, and the lake itself was well-nigh covered with the canoes and rafts of the natives. The Spaniards saw too, with surprise and admiration, floating gardens—some

of them of considerable extent—on the surface of the lake, covered with flowers and shrubs. The scene was the most beautiful that had ever met their eyes, and they were filled with delight and admiration. Half way across the causeway they came upon the fort of Xoloc. Here a massive stone wall, twelve feet high, crossed the dyke, and stretched out on to the lake on either side; towers were erected at its angles, and, properly defended, it could have resisted the attack of an army.

An archway gave passage through the wall. Here a great number of nobles were assembled, who welcomed the Spaniards with formal ceremony; and the army then marched forward along the dyke till it reached a wooden drawbridge near the gate of the city. As they crossed this a splendid procession was seen approaching. It was preceded by three great officers of state, bearing golden wands; behind them the emperor himself lay in his palanquin, borne on the shoulders of nobles, with a canopy of rich feather-work sparkling with jewels above his head. Montezuma alighted when within a short distance, and with the canopy still carried over his head, and leaning upon his brother and nephew, he advanced towards Cortez.

The general, dismounting, went forward with a few of his principal officers to meet him. The emperor received his guest with courtesy, and expressed his pleasure at seeing him in his capital, while Cortez replied with expressions of profound respect, accompanied by thanks for the superb presents that Montezuma had sent him. The emperor re-entered his litter, and the Spaniards followed with music playing and colours flying. Although already familiar with Mexican architecture, they were astonished by the magnificence of the buildings that bordered the great streets along which they marched. Here were the mansions of the nobles, built of a red porous stone and covering a large space of ground. The flat roofs were protected by stone parapets, and many of them were laid out as gardens. Between these mansions were broad terraces which presented a mass of flowers. Here and there were

great market-places, surrounded by porticoes of stone, and above all the temples with their towering pyramids rose high in the air.

Along the whole line crowds of people watched the procession of the troops, gazing with surprise and admiration at the cavaliers on horseback and at the flashing armour and arms of the Spaniards, and with wrath and indignation at the Tlascalan army which followed in their rear. The street was in many places intersected by canals. Passing over these on light bridges, they at last reached a great square near the centre of the city, on one side of which rose the huge temple of the war god of the Aztecs. Facing this was a palace of Montezuma's father, which had been appropriated by the emperor as quarters for the Spaniards.

The emperor himself received them in the courtyard, presented Cortez with a magnificent necklace, and then, saying he would visit them later on, withdrew. The palace was large enough to afford accommodation for the whole army, and as it was surrounded by a massive stone wall, flanked with towers, Cortez saw with satisfaction that it could without difficulty resist any sudden attack. He placed sentries on the walls and planted his cannon to command the approaches; and in order to prevent any chance of a quarrel arising, he forbade any soldiers to leave the palace without orders. A large number of Mexican slaves had been appointed to attend upon the strangers, and a meal was speedily served by them to the troops, who were then permitted to take a sleep for some hours during the heat of the day.

The emperor paid another visit in the evening, and had a long conversation with Cortez, distributing a large number of rich presents among the Spaniards before leaving. After he had left they celebrated their arrival in the city by a salute with their cannon, whose thunder added to the impression produced upon the natives by the tales they had heard of the prowess of their visitors, and heightened their belief in the supernatural powers of the Spaniards. The next day Cortez returned the emperor's visit. He was accompanied by a few

of his principal officers, and five or six soldiers. The palace was of immense size, built, like the rest of the houses, of red stone, and ornamented with marble. Fountains sparkled in the courts through which the Spaniards passed, and crowds of Aztec nobles thronged the squares and great halls. The walls of these apartments were hung with richly dyed cotton, or with draperies of gorgeous feather-work, while the fumes of incense rose up in clouds from censers.

Montezuma, surrounded by a few of his nobles, received them; and Cortez at once opened to him what he considered to be the chief object of his enterprise, and through the medium of Marina expounded the doctrines of Christianity, and besought the emperor to turn from his false gods. As Montezuma had himself been a priest, and was an ardent devotee of his religion, it was scarcely to be expected that he would favourably entertain the proposal to change his religion. He answered courteously that no doubt the god of Cortez was good to the Spaniards just as his own gods were good to him. What his visitors said of the creation of the world was similar to what he himself believed; his people had occupied the land but for a few years, having been led there by a great being, who after giving them laws had withdrawn to the regions of the east. When he left he had promised that he or his descendants would again visit them and resume his empire. The wonderful deeds of the Spaniards, their complexion, the fact that they came from the east—all showed that they were the descendants of this god.

"Your sovereign beyond the waters is, I know, the rightful lord of all. I rule in his name. You, Malinzin, are his ambassador, and you and your brethren shall share what I have."

He then dismissed his visitors with fresh presents. Malinzin was the name by which Cortez was universally known by the natives. Malinche was ever with him, and they connected him with her, and called him by the masculine form of her name.

But gratified as the Spaniards were at the kindness of their reception, and with the munificent gifts showered upon them, they could not but feel that their position was a precarious one.

They were in the centre of a great city, with a warlike population; it was broken up by its canals with their movable bridges into a series of fortresses, and it would be well-nigh hopeless to endeavour by force to make their way out of it. At present all seemed fair, but they were well aware that Montezuma had endeavoured in every way, save by open war, to prevent their coming; and that, influenced as he was by the oracles of the gods, he might at any moment exchange his apparent friendship for open enmity.

Two days after arriving at the capital Roger asked Malinche if she could obtain permission from the general for him to cross the lake to Tezcuco, in order that he might pay his friends there a visit.

Presently she returned, saying that the general himself would speak to him.

Roger had been named Sancho by the Spaniards, as he had not ventured to give his own name; and it was supposed that he had forgotten that which he had borne as a child.

"Sancho," the general said; "I know, from what Marina says, that you have great intelligence, though you have so long been cut off from your own people. You see that our position here is a strange one; we are guests, and yet, to some extent, we are prisoners. The Tlascalans with us are hated by the Mexicans, and either between them and the natives, or maybe between some of my own soldiers and the citizens, a brawl might arise which would be used as a pretext for an attack upon us. As I feel that I can rely upon your discretion, I will tell you of some news that I received at Cholula; but which I have kept to myself.

"The natives on the coast have shown themselves hostile to the garrison of a hundred and fifty men, whom I left there under Juan de Escalante. A chief near there sent in to tender his allegiance, and asked that four white men should be sent to escort him to the town. As soon as they got to him two of them were murdered, but the other two managed to escape and made their way back. Don Juan marched with fifty of his men and several thousand Indian allies to

attack the treacherous chief. There was a desperate battle, our allies fled, but the soldiers stood their ground, and—thanks to the aid of the Blessed Virgin—resisted all the attacks made upon them. But eight of the men were slain, and Juan himself was mortally wounded.

"The Indian prisoners taken said that the attack, like that at Cholula, had been made by the orders of Montezuma. You may do us good service by finding out what are the intentions of the Mexicans. Therefore, by all means, carry out your intention of going across to Tezcuco. The young king is a nephew of the emperor, but he has suffered much at Montezuma's hands, and has been stripped of the greater part of his father's dominions. He can, therefore, hardly be friendly to him at heart. At any rate you may be able to learn in conversation with him what are his sentiments towards us. Tezcuco was long the rival of Mexico, and as the alliance of the Tlascalans has proved of the greatest advantage to us, still more should we benefit if the Tezucucans were our friends. If we have to retire from Mexico we might take refuge there. At any rate, if nothing else comes of it, you might learn from the king whether he is aware of any treachery meditated against us. He saved you, Malinche says, from Montezuma and the priests once; and would be likely, therefore, to warn you did he know that danger was impending."

When Marina had translated this, Roger at once agreed to do his best to discover if any treachery were meant.

"You had best go in disguise," Cortez said. "Donna Marina will make arrangements for a canoe to be here after nightfall; and by staining your face and putting on the attire of an Aztec noble—for which we have ample materials at hand—you would not be noticed as you pass through the throng of boats on the lake. It would be best that you did not go as a Spanish soldier: you might be arrested on the road, and perhaps carried away and sacrificed at one of the altars. Once at Tezcuco you must, of course, act in the matter as you think best."

Marina—who was not, like the Spaniards, confined to the

palace—had no difficulty in arranging for a canoe, and as soon as it became dark, Roger, dressed as an Aztec cacique, and with his face slightly stained, took his place in it. The lake was thronged with canoes, but the craft in which he was seated passed without notice through them, and after two hours' paddling reached Tezcuco. Telling the natives that they were to wait for his return, however long that might be, Roger proceeded to the palace. Avoiding the principal streets and squares, where his unusual height would attract attention, he passed unquestioned into the palace amid the throng of chiefs and nobles who were entering or leaving it; and made his way to the apartment of Cuitcatl. It was empty, but clapping his hand the attendant who had before waited upon him entered.

As Roger's attire was similar to the one he had worn while at Tezcuco the man recognized him at once.

Roger bade him go in search of Cuitcatl, and tell him privately that he was there and beg him to come.

In a few minutes Cuitcatl entered the room and greeted Roger most heartily.

"I am glad, indeed, to see you, my friend, and Cacama and the queen and the princess will rejoice also. There was great anxiety for you after your first escape, for the emperor was furious when he heard that you had slipped off. The priests had assured him that the sacrifice of a white man to the god of war would ensure his aid and protection against the white invaders. Runners were despatched in scores to every town and village, and although I knew that Bathalda was familiar with every foot of the country, and would give his life for you if needs be, it seemed impossible that you should be able to make your way through. Then came the news of your fight in the hills, how you had a bow that carried arrows to an unheard-of distance, and how in a hand-to-hand fight you had prevailed against a score of our soldiers. After that you seemed lost. The officers commanding the troops were convinced that you had not descended the eastern slopes of the mountains; and the spies who were watching every movement

of the white men on the coast reported that no white man had joined them. Therefore, it was supposed that you must have returned west of the range of hills, and every town and village was searched, and every grove and plantation examined. We were all very anxious for you, and it was not until a week after we had the news of the wonderful defeat of the Tlascalans by the white men, that Bathalda returned with the message you sent us, and the news that you had joined the white men there.

"Since then we have, of course, heard nothing of you. Cacama said that he did not see you when he met Malinzin; but of course he did not examine the faces of the white soldiers, being occupied solely with their chief and the officers round him. But we all felt assured that we should hear from you shortly. So you have resumed your Aztec dress?"

"I thought it better to do so for the purpose of coming here," Roger replied: "for if the priests want a victim so sorely, it seemed to me that if I ventured to leave the palace dressed in my Spanish garb I might be seized and carried off."

"You are quite right," Cuitcatl agreed; "the priests are furious against you all, and I cannot altogether blame them. Your general may, as he says, come as an ambassador from his king to Montezuma; and if he had orders to come to his court at all costs he was not to blame if he fought his way whenever he was opposed; but this does not justify him in insulting our religion and even assaulting and hurling down our gods at every opportunity. He even tried to persuade the emperor that our gods were false, and spoke insolently of them yesterday when Montezuma conducted him at his request into the holy shrines. Cacama was one of the strongest advisers that a peaceful reception should be accorded to the white visitors, but even he is being greatly turned against them by their conduct towards our gods. Come, I will take you to the royal apartments, and leave you in a room where no one will enter until I inform Cacama that you are here."

A few minutes later the young king entered the apartment where Cuitcatl had placed Roger, and embraced him with real

affection. "Truly I am glad to see you again, Roger Hawkshaw. I am glad to see you for yourself, and I hail you as a counsellor in the strange pass to which we have come. Here are Maclutha and my sister Amenche."

The queen and the princess entered as he spoke, and each gave Roger their hand, which, bowing deeply, he raised to his lips, having before told them that this was the salutation among his own people to ladies of high rank.

"We did not think, Roger Hawkshaw, when we last parted, that we should meet again so soon. Who could have believed then that the little band of white men, of whose arrival upon the coast we had heard, would have made their way on to the capital when the emperor was bent upon preventing their coming? We have trembled for you, and have prayed the gods to protect you; and greatly did we rejoice when we heard from Cuitcatl's follower that you had surmounted all your dangers safely and joined the Whites.

"It has been a strange time here, since you left. I have been for the most part at the capital. The news that came from day to day of the progress of the Whites filled everyone with surprise and consternation. We of the council met daily, but Montezuma passed his time at the shrines and among the priests. He was a brave warrior and a great general once, but he is no longer himself. My father's prophecy seems to have unmanned him, and he has given himself up wholly to superstition. I believe in our gods and pay them due honour, but I do not hold that a man should not think for himself, or that he should trust wholly in the priests, who are but men like ourselves; and who are, methinks, but poor judges of worldly affairs, though wise and learned in matters concerning religion. Montezuma thinks otherwise, and the result is, that no orders have been issued, no determination arrived at, and we have the disgrace of seeing a handful of strangers installed in the capital.

"Mind, my counsels have always been that they should be conducted honourably from the coast, and treated as ambassadors; but we have done neither one thing nor the other. They

have been loaded with gifts, but forbidden to come here; yet since they came, in spite of orders, we have seemed as if we feared to meet them; and I blush at the thought of the treacherous plan to destroy them at Cholula. The gods had prophesied that they would find their grave there. But the gods were wrong; and it may be that the God of the Whites is more powerful than ours. If not, how is it that they did not avenge the indignities offered to them by the Whites at Cempoalla, where their images were hurled down from their altars? and at Cholula, where the most sacred of all the temples was attacked and captured, and the emblem of the White God set up on its summit?

"You yourself, Roger Hawkshaw, warned us against these Spaniards. You said that they were cruel masters to the people they had conquered, and above all things cruel in the matter of religion, forcing all who came under their sway to accept their God under pain of death, and that they would slay even you, a white man like themselves, did they know that you did not belong to their people. Tell us what is to be done. Why are these men in our capital? What are their objects? Brave and strong as they are, they cannot hope to overcome a nation, or to force all Anahuac to forsake their own gods and to accept the God of the Whites."

"I know not what are the designs of Cortez, the leader whom you call Malinzin. I should say the Spaniards are here with several motives. In the first place, there is the desire for wealth and spoil; in the second, religious ardour—the desire to bring all within the pale of their Church; in the third place, the love of adventure; and, lastly, the honour they will receive at the hands of their sovereign for opening so rich an empire to his arms."

"You do not think, then, they intend to conquer us?"

"Cortez cannot think of doing so with the means at his disposal, Cacama; but doubtless he has sent home reports of the richness of the country, and forces many times more numerous than those under his command may be sent out to his assistance."

" Does he know that you have come hither ? " Cacama asked suddenly.

" He does," Roger replied. " I could not leave the palace without permission ; and Malinche told him of the kindness I had experienced at your hands. He himself is uneasy at the position in which he finds himself, uncertain of Montezuma's intentions, and fearful of an assault ; and he bade me try to find out, as far as might be, what was the general opinion respecting the Spaniards."

" The opinion of the ignorant," Cacama said, with a contemptuous wave of the hand, " is worth nothing. They go where they are led ; they believe what they are last told ; they shout when they are told to shout. They have no opinion of their own upon aught but what relates to themselves. Among the nobles, the priests, and the learned there is much division of opinion. At present we wait ; but, frankly, at any moment a storm may follow the calm. The priests, who of course are bitterly hostile to the strangers, are without doubt working, and they have great power with all. But I should say that, on the whole, you are safer here with me than you would be across the water there. I do not mean that there is any immediate danger, but you must remember that Montezuma has been insulted and humiliated, and made to appear small in the sight of the people. He is one of the proudest of men, and although at present he feigns friendship with the Spaniards, a moment will come when he will revolt against being thus bearded in his capital ; and he has but to wave his hand for these invaders to be wiped out. However, let us talk of other matters at present. Of course you are not thinking of returning to-night ? "

" I intended to do so ; and the canoe in which I came is waiting for me."

" We cannot think of letting you go," Cacama said, decidedly. " I will send an official back with a message from you saying that you think you can do more here than by returning ; and that you crave leave to stay for the present ; but that you will come over in the morning and report to him all that you

have learned here. You can leave here soon after daybreak, see your general, and be back again before the full heat of the day."

As Roger was in no hurry to return, Cuiteatl went out to despatch an official with the message to Cortez, or rather to Malinche, as the message would then be delivered privately to him; whereas if Cortez were asked for, the man might be brought into his presence when engaged with some of his officers. Roger did not know whether the fact of his being away from the palace had been made public, for Cortez might consider it would cause discontent among some of his followers were it known that their last joined recruit was permitted to leave the town, whereas no one else was allowed to stir beyond the limits of their quarters.

CHAPTER XV.

AGAIN AT TEZUCO.

UNTIL a late hour in the night Roger sat talking to Cacama and his family. Although they had heard from Bathalda all that had happened from the time of their leaving Tezucoco to their arrival at Tlascalala, he had to go over it again. Bathalda had told them that Roger had found a former acquaintance in Malinche, who was all-powerful with the white leaders; and Aménche asked many questions concerning her—how Roger had known her before, and for how long, what she was like, and why he applied to her instead of going straight to the white general.

"You have heard me speak of her before," Roger said, in answer to the first question. "I told you that I had learnt your language from a Mexican slave-girl, who was one of my attendants during the time I was at Tabasco. She was with me the whole time I was there, and if it had not been for learning the language from her, and conversing with her, I do not know how I should have got through the time. I was

sorry to leave her behind, and promised her that if ever I got rich enough here, I would send and purchase her freedom."

"You seem to have taken a strange interest in a slave-girl!" Amenche said.

"It was natural that it should be so, Princess; I was little better than a slave myself. At any rate I was a prisoner, and naturally took to the one person who was kind to me; we were companions and friends, rather than master and attendant; and directly I heard that she was with Cortez, and had gained great influence with him, I naturally went to her."

"Is she very beautiful?"

"I used not to think her beautiful at all when we were at Tabasco together; but she has changed greatly during the months that have passed since I saw her. Yes, I think she is certainly beautiful now. But not so beautiful as others I have seen."

"But why did you go to her?" the girl again persisted.

"Because I cannot speak the language of the Spaniards; and it was necessary for my safety for them to believe that I am one of themselves, rescued from some Spanish ship cast by a gale on their shores when I was a little lad. Had I gone to Cortez direct, he would probably have guessed from my dress and from my speaking the language that this was how I came to be here; but had I not seen Malinche before I saw him, she would have recognized me, and would no doubt have told Cortez that she had known me from the time I was cast ashore near Tabasco, somewhat over two years ago. He would then have known that I could not be a Spaniard, for if so, I could not in so short a time have lost my own language."

Cacama now interposed, and asked many questions about Tlascala and its people.

"Some of the Tlascalan princes and caciques gave their daughters as wives to the Spaniards, did they not?"

"Six of them did so," Roger replied. "The ladies were first baptized into the Christian religion, and then married by the priests to as many of the chief leaders of the Spaniards."

"And what did you think of that?" Cacama asked.

"I did not think much about it," Roger said; "for it was no business of mine, but that of the ladies and their friends. It was certainly a politic course on the part both of Cortez and the Tlascalans, and bound the alliance more closely together. But methinks that, upon such work as the Spaniards are engaged in, a man were better without a wife both for his sake and her own. A man who goes into battle with no one but himself to think of may take joy in the strife, for he knows that if he falls it makes no very great matter to anyone. But if he has a wife hard by, who will be left a widow if he is slain, it must be ever present to him while he is fighting; and though he may not fight less stoutly, it must cause him grievous anxiety, and take away the pleasure of fighting."

"You have already told us that the white men are good husbands," the queen said.

"I do not know that they are in any way better in that respect than your own people, Queen Maclutha; there are good and bad—men who treat their wives well, and men who neglect them."

"But you told us that they only had one wife each," she said; "and that even kings are kept to this rule, as well as their humblest subjects."

"That is so," Roger said; "one man one wife, whatever his rank. There is no occasion for the palaces of our king to be as extensive as those of Montezuma."

"And if these officers who have married here, were to return home, and leave their wives behind them, could they not marry again?"

"No," Roger said; "as the ladies have become Christians, and been married according to the rites of the Church, they could not be lawfully set aside."

"And you have no wife in England, Roger Hawkslaw?" Cacama asked.

Roger laughed merrily: "Why I was but a boy when I left home; and as far as marriage goes I am but a boy still."

We consider it young enough if we take a wife at five-and-twenty, and I lack six years of that yet."

"You are a man," Cacama said gravely. "You are a man in size and strength, and a man in courage, as you well showed the other day when you were attacked by numbers of our best soldiers. You are thoughtful and prudent; years go for nothing. You are a man, and even in years you are not, according to our customs, too young to marry. Now, tell me—we have heard much of that bad business at Cholula—tell me, do you think that there was treachery on the part of the people, or was it a mere pretext of the Spaniards to fall upon the inhabitants and sack the town?"

"I am sure that treachery was intended," Roger said. "We learnt it from three people, a lady and two priests; and the Cholula nobles themselves when taxed by Cortez with their intention to fall upon us, admitted that the accusation was true. Besides, the whole people were under arms and ready to attack, and poured out under their leaders to the assault the moment the first gun told that their intentions were discovered. No, there is no doubt whatever that a general destruction of the white men was intended; and although the punishment inflicted was terrible, I cannot say that it was not justified under the circumstances. Moreover, we knew that there was a Mexican army lying but a short distance away, in readiness to enter the town and join in the attack against us."

"It was a terrible error, as well as a crime on the part of the emperor, if it be true that he was concerned in it," Cacama said. "If so, he took no one here into his counsel, but acted wholly on the advice of the priests."

"That is where the general considers the danger lies. He would trust the caciques, for men of rank in whatever country are faithful to their word, and do not pretend friendship when they mean hostility. Were Montezuma guided by them there would be no fear of treachery, but as he has given himself to the priests, and they can by means of the oracles persuade him to almost anything, Cortez feels that the danger is great."

"Well now, we had better to rest," Cacama said, rising. "You are to start with the first streak of light, so as to be back before the sun is high, and it is long past midnight now. Cuitcatl, it would, I think, be well for you to accompany our friend. A rumour may have got abroad that he is again our guest, and those who longed for his blood before may long for it again. I would not that he should cross the lake unattended."

"I was about to propose doing so," the young noble said. "I know the priests, and can guess that at present a white victim is what they most of all desire. Therefore, I will certainly accompany him to Mexico."

Roger and his Mexican friend were taken across the lake in a canoe, rowed by four strong men. It was one of the private canoes of the palace, without the royal insignia, used for the conveyance of messengers, and built for speed. She took them across to the capital in a very short time, and, entering one of the canals, landed them close to the palace occupied by the Spaniards. The sentry at the gate was surprised at the height of the young Aztec chief who approached, and did not recognize him until he spoke. Even then he would not let him pass until he called an officer.

"I have been absent by the order of the general," Roger said.

"I have no doubt it is all right," the officer replied, "but I must take you to him."

Cortez had only just risen, for the hour was still very early, and the sun was but now showing himself over the mountains to the east. He was taking a cup of chocolate.

"That is all right," he said to the officer, as soon as he saw Roger. "Sancho has been absent upon my orders."

He then called Malinche from an adjoining room.

"You are back earlier than I expected," he said, as soon as the interpreter entered. "Have you any serious news?"

"No, General; Cacama is himself friendly. He is unaware of any treacherous designs on the part of the emperor, but admits that the situation is a critical one, and that it is possible

the influence of the priests may again induce Montezuma to take a hostile action."

"Do you think we could count upon him as an ally?"

"I think not, sir; although I have not as yet sounded him. Cacama has been very badly treated by Montezuma, and he by no means approves of the emperor's conduct throughout this matter, but I think that his patriotism would overcome his sense of private wrong. I can tell you more farther on. Cacama has invited me to stay with him for the present, and I think I might be of more use to you there than here."

"I think so, too," Cortez said, "and, indeed, you have not yet entered my band regularly like the rest. It is right that you should have freedom of action, especially as you are the only man among us who knows anything of the Mexicans, for even Marina knows nothing of this side of the mountains."

"Don't you think that you will run great risk in staying there alone?" Marina asked on her own account.

"Some danger no doubt, Malinche; but I shall be on my guard, and Cacama will take precautions for my safety. Even the priests would not venture to seize me in his palace, and the Tezcucans are far less bigoted than the people of this city."

"I do not think he will be in much greater danger there than he would be here," Cortez said, when these remarks were translated to him. "We are all in danger, we are sitting on a mine that may explode any minute. The young fellow is sharp-witted, and with his knowledge of the language and the people can be trusted to take care of himself. Sancho, if anything should happen to us, and you should hear that we have been destroyed, I charge you to carry the news to the coast, and to order in my name, that all shall embark on board ship and sail to Cuba. It would be useless to try to maintain a foothold here. Spain would avenge it, and with ampler means than mine carry out the conquest of this country."

A few minutes later, Roger, having said good-bye to Juan and Pedro, and told them that he might be absent for some time, started to Tezcuco. They had scarcely left the town, when a

canoe with six rowers, issued from one of the canals and followed in their wake.

"See, they are after us!" Cuitcatl said, looking back. "Doubtless the Spanish quarters are closely watched to see who enter and leave them, and the news that a tall young noble had entered was carried at once to the authorities, and the boat was got in readiness to follow when you left, and see who you were and where you were going. However, they will not overhaul us. I bade the officer in charge of the canoes last night to pick me out four of his best men, and in so light a boat we shall travel as fast as that behind us, although they have two extra hands."

"Yes, and they have four sitters," Roger said, looking back.

"No doubt they had orders to arrest you and bring you back; they did not reckon on our speed. The two extra men destroy their chances of coming up to us, altogether. Row hard, men; I don't want that boat to overtake us."

The paddlers redoubled their exertions, and the light boat almost flew along over the water. For a few minutes those in the canoe behind also did their utmost; but it was plain that they were falling behind rather than gaining. Then one of the officials stood up and shouted an order for them to stop. They were some distance behind, but the words could be plainly heard. The Tezcucans looked scared as they heard the words "In the name of the Emperor."

"Never mind them," Cuitcatl said; "we are acting under the orders of our king. Besides, we are so far away that they cannot be sure their words are heard. If they have any complaint to make they can make it to Cacama, and he will answer them."

The boat was soon out of hearing of its pursuer, who fell farther and farther behind, and was a good mile away when they landed at Tezcuco.

"Run the boat up and lay her by the side of the others," Cuitcatl said to the rowers. "Then go at once to your homes and say nought to anyone about the journey you have made. The officials will find out what they want to know as to whom

we are, and will care nothing as to who were the individual boatmen who rowed us; still it is as well to keep silent.

"Of course, Roger," for the lad had asked him to drop the second part of his name, "it will soon be known that you have returned here. With such numbers of persons in the palace it cannot be hidden; besides, you are well known by sight to most people in the town."

"I quite see that, Cuitcatl, and perceive no good in trying in any way to conceal myself; these long legs of mine cannot be got rid of, and tell their story too plainly. However, it makes no difference, I shall be safe in the palace, and shall only go abroad in the daytime. They will not venture to try to carry off openly one known to be under Cacama's protection."

Cacama, on their return, agreed with Roger that it was of no use to try to conceal his identity; and the lad, after washing the stains from his face and hands, took his accustomed place at the banquet, and was greeted by many of his former acquaintances. After the meal Cacama told him that, having heard from Bathalda of the wonderful shooting he had made with his great bow, he was desirous of seeing it, and that by his orders the forester, who had been sent for the evening before by Cuitcatl, had been directing some of the artisans to manufacture a weapon of similar strength.

"We will go and see how it is getting on," he said.

Proceeding to the workshops attached to the palace, they found that the bow was finished. It was constructed of a very tough, but elastic, wood. Three slips of this had been placed together and bound with sinews. Bathalda ran forward when he saw Roger, and taking his hand carried it to his forehead. Roger shook the stout fellow's hand heartily.

"He is a brave fellow," he said to Cuitcatl, who had accompanied them, "and fought manfully and well. Had he not guarded my back during the fight I should not be here to tell the tale now."

"We have made the bow according to our instructions," the

head of the artisans said respectfully to the king; "but it does not seem to us possible that anyone can use it. Three of us have tried together to string it, but in vain."

"It is a good bow," Roger said, examining it.

"Do they shoot with weapons like that over there," Cacama asked, nodding in the direction of Mexico.

"No," Roger said, "for the most part they use cross-bows, and their bows are much smaller than this. The English are the only people who use bows like this. They are our national weapons, and outside our island there are few indeed who can even bend them. As to the stringing, it is knack rather than strength. See here," and taking the bow which was just his own height, he placed his knee against it, bent it and slipped the string into the notch with ease. Then holding it at arm's length, he drew it till the string touched his ear.

"It is a great deal stiffer than that I made before, Bathalda; and is about the strength of those we use at home. Now for the arrows."

These had been made by another set of men, and were an inch or two over a yard in length, with copper tips. While he was examining them Cacama had taken up the bow, but, though a strong and vigorous man for his race, he could bend it but a very short distance.

"It is a wonderful weapon," he said, "and I should not have thought that mortal man, whatever his colour, could have used it. Now, let us go down into the practice yard. Cuitcatl, do you fetch the queen and her ladies to look on."

"I am no great marksman, Prince," Roger said. "I am perhaps somewhat better than an average shot, but I have seen marksmen who could do feats that I would not even attempt."

They descended to the piece of ground, where many of the young nobles were engaged in shooting, and in practice with arms. Roger had often been there before, but had carefully abstained from taking any part in the mimic contests, for he knew that men who are beaten sometimes feel malice, and he was anxious to keep on the best terms with all. Cuitcatl had

often urged him to try a bout with himself or others with the sword; but this, too, he had always declined, and his friend had supposed that he was aware his skill was by no means equal to his strength. But now the Spaniards had proved to the Mexicans the fighting powers of white men, Roger had no longer any reasons for hanging back. As soon as he was seen approaching with Cacama, the Mexicans abandoned their sport, and gathered round. The story of the defeat of a band of Montezuma's soldiers by the white man had been whispered abroad, and Cuitcahl had mentioned to his friends what he had heard from Bathalda of the mighty bow Roger had used; but when they saw the weapon with which he was now provided, their wonder was to a large extent mingled with incredulity, they passed it from hand to hand, tried but in vain to bend it, and murmured among themselves that the thing was impossible.

"What will you have for your mark," Cacama asked.

"One of these targets will do well enough," he said; pointing to those at which the Mexicans had been shooting. These were boards about five feet six in height, and some fourteen inches in width, presenting the size of a man. They were painted white and supported by a leg hinged behind them. The distance at which the Mexicans had been shooting was about forty yards. Roger stepped a hundred from one of them, and made a mark upon the ground.

"An English archer would laugh at a target like that," he said to Cacama, "but it is nigh three years since I practised. I have seen men who could with certainty, at this distance, hit a bird the size of a pigeon sitting on the top of that target twenty times in succession, and think it by no means extraordinary shooting."

The queen and some of her ladies now appeared upon a terrace looking down into the court-yard. Roger took the bow, fitted an arrow to the string, and drew it to his ear—a murmur of astonishment rising from the Aztecs. There was a pause for a moment, and then the arrow sped. There was a sharp tap as it struck the target, and stood quivering in it just in the centre line about four feet from the ground.

"The bow is an excellent one," Roger said, and quickly discharged two more arrows, both of which struck within two or three inches of the first. As it was the power of the bow, rather than his own shooting, that Roger wished to exhibit he now had the target removed a hundred yards farther back, and others placed one on each side of it. At this distance he discharged three more arrows, shooting more carefully than before. All three struck the boards, although at varying heights; and a shout of surprise arose from the lookers on.

"How far will it carry?" Cacama asked.

"It might carry another hundred yards, but the aim cannot be depended upon at over two hundred yards, even by good shots," Roger said. "Of course the longer ranges are useful for firing at a body of men. I should say that large tree would be about the extreme range. If you will send two men down to it, I will see whether I can shoot as far: we should not see the arrow from here. Will you tell them to stand one on each side of the tree, but well away from it?—there is no saying where the arrow may go at this distance."

When two of the attendants had taken their places, twenty or thirty yards from the tree, Roger drew the bow to the fullest, and giving to the arrow the elevation he had been taught, as most suitable for an extreme range, unloosed the string. The arrow, which was of dark wood, glanced through the air; the eye could follow it only a short distance. No sound was heard this time, but in a few seconds the Mexicans were seen running towards the tree.

"Do not touch the arrow," Cacama shouted; and then, followed by the crowd, for the numbers had greatly increased as the news of what was going on had spread through the palace, he walked forward to the tree. The massive stem was more than four feet in diameter, and within a few inches of the centre, and at a height of three feet from the ground, the arrow was sticking. The Mexicans were silent with astonishment, mingled with a certain amount of awe, for shooting like this seemed to them to be supernatural.

"And you said you were not a good shot!" the king said.

"It was a pure accident," Roger asserted. "I might shoot twenty arrows, and not hit the tree again. I had not the least idea that I should do so. I only wished to show you how far a well-made bow would send an arrow, when drawn by an Englishman."

Cacama ordered the arrow to be left in the tree, and a large stone to be placed at the spot from which Roger had fired.

"They shall remain," he said, "as a memento of this shot. I will introduce among my people the custom which you say prevails in your country; and every child shall be bound to practise daily with bows and arrows. I do not think that any of our race will ever come to use such a weapon as that, but they may at least learn to bend bows greatly stronger than those we are accustomed to use."

"They will doubtless do so," Roger said. "It is a matter of practice, and of strengthening certain muscles of the right arm, for a man far stronger than I am would be unable to bend that bow had he not been trained to its use from the earliest age. I should recommend, Prince, that you not only give the order you have spoken of, but institute a monthly gathering, with prizes for skill, and honours to the best marksmen. In this way all would take an interest in the sport, and it would become as popular among your youth as it is with us."

Again Roger's bow was passed round. It had seemed to bend so easily in his hands that those who had not tried it before could scarce credit its strength until they had handled it; but even the most powerful men found that they could only draw the arrow a few inches.

As they walked towards the terrace upon which the queen and her ladies were standing, Cuitcatl said:

"I had intended to ask you, Roger, to try a bout of sword-play with some of us, but I will not do so now. After what we have seen of the strength of your arm, I should be sorry indeed to stand up against you, even with blunted weapons or with sticks, for there would be no resisting a downright blow. The news came to us of the terrible blows struck by the Spaniards and how they clave through sword,

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"Well, Maclutha," Cacama said; "what think you of what you have seen? No wonder those who met with the white men in battle said that they had supernatural strength, and that even the sturdy Tlascalans could not resist them. We will have the bow hung up in the armoury with a great gold chain, which shall be the reward of the first man who can, like our friend, draw the arrow to the head."

"It is wonderful," the queen said; "and it would be well indeed, if, as you say, the youth of Tezcuco could shoot like that."

Amenche said nothing, but her cheeks were flushed with excitement and pleasure.

That evening, when Cacama was conversing alone with Roger, he said:

"My friend, you know that the Tlascalan caciques have given their daughters as wives to some of the Spaniards; I was talking to you of marriage last night, and what you said about your age was ridiculous: you are a man and a warrior. I now offer you the hand of my sister Amenche; she loves you, as Maclutha and I have seen for some time. From what you said, I gather that your religion would not regard the ceremony as binding did she not accept your God; but I do not think she would raise any objection on that score, seeing, as we all do, that your God has proved more powerful than ours."

Roger was struck with astonishment at the offer. He had regarded marriage as a matter not to be thought of for many years; and until lately he would have said that, if he ever did marry, it would be the little cousin who had three years before said good-bye to him at Plymouth. But of late he had felt the charm of this beautiful little princess; and since the night when she had come down to say farewell to him in the garden, and he had felt her hand tremble in his, and had seen a tear glisten on her cheek in the moonlight, he had thought a good deal of her. The chances of his ever returning to England were

comparatively slight ; dangers of all kinds surrounded him, the Spaniards might be attacked and massacred at any moment, and if so, he would probably share their fate. If, however, he was married to this Mexican princess, and a brother-in-law of the King of Tezcuco, he would be regarded as one of the people. His position would be a high and honourable one, and although his life would be far different from that to which he had hitherto looked forward, it might be a very happy one.

He sat in silence for two or three minutes after Cacama had ceased speaking, and then said : " Forgive me, Prince, for not responding at once to an offer so far above my deserts, and of the honour of which I am most deeply sensible ; there could be no greater happiness for a man than to be the husband of one so fair and in every way charming as the Princess Amenche, but your offer came upon me altogether as a surprise. As I have told you, I have hitherto regarded myself as still a lad, and marriage as an event not to be thought of for years ; but as you do not regard my youth as an objection there is no reason why I should do so. It is of the future that I rather think. It seems to me now that I could be content to settle down for life here with so charming a wife ; but I cannot say that I might always be of that mind. The love of country is strong in every man, and the time might come when, if opportunity offered, I might long to return home to England."

" That I have talked over with the queen and with Amenche herself," Cacama said. " My sister naturally would be sorry to leave her own country, but if the time came that you should wish to return home, she would not hesitate to make the sacrifice and to accompany you. A Mexican woman when she loves is ready to give up everything."

For a moment Roger turned the matter rapidly over in his mind, and saw that even were he disposed to refuse Amenche's hand, which indeed he was not, it would be almost impossible for him to do so. It would be a deep offence to this friendly prince ; it would be a cruel blow to the girl who had confessed her devotion for him. As to Dorothy, she would have deemed him dead years ago ; and should he ever return,

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he would find that she had long since been married; for the daughters of the wealthy merchant, Diggory Beggs, would not want for suitors. He held out his hand to the prince:

"I accept most gratefully your offer, Cacama, and promise that, so far as in me lies, I will do my best to render your sister happy, and to prove myself worthy of her choice."

"I am heartily glad," the prince said warmly. "I love my sister, and I have watched you closely. I believe you to be worthy of her, and I am sure that in you I shall find not only a friend and a brother, but a wise counsellor and a valiant leader of my troops; and that, with your advice, I shall be able to advance my people in the arts of peace as well as war, and perhaps to win back my father's possessions. As to the question of religion, of which you spoke, there is indeed no difficulty. My grandfather, the great Nezahualcoyotl, the wisest and most powerful of our monarchs, did not believe in the Aztec gods. He built a great temple which he dedicated to the Unknown God. Here he worshipped himself, and did his utmost to induce his subjects to abandon the cruel worship of the Aztec gods; he forbade all sacrifices, even of animals, and permitted only flowers and sweet-scented perfumes to be offered up on the altars. When after his death the Aztec power increased, and that of Tezeeneo diminished, the people again embraced the cruel faith of the Aztecs. Neither my father nor myself have been strong enough to set ourselves against the priests; but he, as well as I, believed that my grandfather was right, and that the Unknown God is the Ruler of the world. My sister, has of course, been educated by the priests, but she knows my father's opinions and my own; she has a horror of the human sacrifices, and believes that there must be a greater and better God than those who are said to delight in blood. So you need not fear that she will make any difficulty as to accepting what you tell her of the white man's God. Now I will fetch her in to you. I think it will be better to allow a short time to pass, and to see how matters go in Mexico, before announcing to others your approaching marriage. If any misfortune should happen to the Spaniards I should at once publish the news,

and have the ceremony performed without loss of time, proclaiming to the people that, although white, you are not of the same race as the Spaniards. If matters go on well, Montezuma himself will doubtless be present at his niece's marriage; and I shall, of course, invite Malinzin and all his officers."

The prince left the room, and in a few minutes returned with his wife, the latter leading Aménche by the hand.

"My friend, Roger Hawkshaw," the young king said, gravely; "I hereby promise to bestow upon you the hand of my sister Aménche. May you find in her a good, loving, and obedient wife."

"I on my part," Roger said, taking the girl's hand, which *the queen held out to him*, "promise to be a true and loving husband *to her*." The girl, who had not raised her eyes since she entered the room, looked up at the tall figure with an expression of perfect confidence.

"I will be true and obedient," she said softly; "and will *love* you all my life."

"What do you do next in your country?" Cacama asked, with a *smile*.

"This is how an engagement is sealed with us," Roger said, and drawing the girl up to him he stooped and kissed her lips.

Three days later, as Roger was sitting with Cuiteatl, an attendant entered, and said that the king wished to see them immediately. They hastened to the royal apartment. Cacama was walking up and down with an angry frown upon his face, while the queen and princess were sitting on the couch pale and agitated.

"Strange news has come from Mexico," Cacama said: "the white men have seized Montezuma, and are holding him prisoner in their quarters. Did anyone ever hear of such an outrage? Mexico is in a state of consternation, but at present none know what to do."

"It seems incredible," Roger exclaimed. "Are you sure of your news?"

"Quite certain," the prince replied.

The news was indeed true. Cortez had found his position

unbearable; he believed that the attack upon the Spaniards on the coast, as well as the meditated treachery at Cholula, were the outcome of the emperor's orders. His native allies had heard rumours in the town that the bridges across the canals were all to be raised; in which case the Spaniards would be prisoners in their palace. He was in the Mexican capital, but he had as yet effected nothing towards the conquest of the country. At any moment he might hear of the landing of an expedition from Cuba, that his authority was revoked, and that another was to reap the benefit of all he had done. He, therefore, called a council of his most trusted officers, and discussed the situation with them. All agreed that some step must at once be taken. Some were in favour of starting that night, and making their way out of the city before a sufficient force could be collected to oppose their retreat; while others were of opinion that it were better to retire openly, with the consent of Montezuma, whose conduct since they had reached the city appeared to be most friendly.

Cortez pointed out that both these methods would be retreats, and the whole country would probably rise against them. Moreover, even if they reached the coast they would have sacrificed all they had won by their valour and sufferings. He proposed a measure which astonished even his boldest companions, namely, that they should go to the royal palace, and bring the emperor—by persuasion if possible, by force if necessary—to their quarters, and there hold him as a hostage for their safety. The proposal was agreed to, and on the following morning Cortez asked for an interview with the emperor, which was at once granted. He proceeded to the palace with his principal officers, ordering the soldiers to follow in groups of twos and threes, so as not to attract particular attention.

Montezuma began to converse with his usual courtesy, but Cortez roughly cut him short, and charged him with being the author of the attack upon the garrison at the port. Montezuma indignantly denied this, and said that he would send at once and arrest the author of the attack. Cortez replied that it was necessary for their safety that Montezuma should come

and reside among them. The emperor was thunderstruck at the proposal, but the soldiers crowded in, loud and threatening words were used, and Montezuma in fear of his life gave way. Had he possessed any of the courage with which he was credited in his youth, he would have called his guards and nobles around him, and died fighting. Having once given in he assumed the air of having done so voluntarily, and ordered his litter to be brought.

In the meantime his attendants, and the nobles who had been present, had spread the news through the city. The Mexicans catching up their arms, ran to the rescue of their monarch; but the Spaniards closed round the litter, and had a blow been struck, the emperor would doubtless have been murdered. Montezuma exhorted the people to be tranquil, assuring them that he was going willingly; and the Mexicans, accustomed to implicit obedience, and fearing that harm would come to the emperor if a struggle began, drew back and allowed the Spaniards to pass, and Montezuma was conveyed a prisoner into the palace occupied by the Spaniards. The act was one of almost unparalleled boldness, but as performed upon a monarch who was the host of his assailants, and with whom they were previously on the most friendly relations, it was an act of treachery, and reflects dishonour upon the fame of Cortez. At the same time the position occupied by the Spaniards was so strange, and even desperate, as to palliate, though it cannot excuse, such a course of action.

There is no reason to believe that Montezuma intended to act treacherously: but he was under the domination of the priests; and had he again changed his mind, as he had already several times done, nothing could have saved the Spaniards from absolute destruction. No honourable man would have acted as Cortez did; but Cortez was a rough soldier, and, moreover, firmly held the doctrine at that time and long afterwards held by the Spaniards in their dealing with those of other religions, that faith need not be kept with heretics and heathen.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TREASURE ROOM.

"IT is infamous," Cacama said, as he paced up and down the room; "but what is to be done? They hold him in their hands as a hostage in the heart of his own capital, and among his own people, and are capable of hanging him from the walls should a hostile movement be made against them. You were right, Roger Hawkshaw, in warning us against these men. They are without faith and honour thus to seize a host who has loaded them with presents, who has emptied his treasuries to appease their greed, and who has treated them with the most extraordinary condescension. It is a crime unheard of, an act of base ingratitude without a parallel. What is to be done?"

Roger was silent. Such a situation, so strange and unlooked for, confounded him.

"I should say," Cuitcatl burst out passionately, "that every Mexican should take up arms and annihilate this handful of invaders. What though Montezuma fall? Better that a monarch should perish than a nation. Besides, Montezuma has shown himself unfit to govern; it is his weakness that has brought things to this pass. Think you that the white men could ever have advanced beyond the plateau of Tlascalala, had all the forces of Mexico barred the way? Think you that they could ever have entered the capital had it been defended with resolution? One moment he flattered the strangers and loaded them with gifts; the next he was ready to send his forces against them. The Cholulans had good reason for believing that he designed the annihilation of the Whites if he did not actually order the attack upon them.

"So on the sea-coast: had the chiefs believed that Montezuma was really friendly to the Whites, would they ever have attacked them? There were two courses open: he might from the first have received the Spaniards frankly, and sent

a mission to escort them honourably to the capital; or he might have called upon every man in his dominion to take up arms and drive them into the sea. He took neither. It is he who has brought them here, and it is better a thousand times that he should die than that ruin should fall upon the country. My advice is, that the troops be called out, that messengers be sent to every city in the valley, bidding them send in their contingent, and that we march to aid the people of Mexico to annihilate this handful of treacherous white men."

Cacama was silent. The advice was in accordance with his own feelings and temperament; but the extreme reverence with which the Aztecs regarded their emperor, paralyzed him.

"We shall see," he said, gloomily. "In a short time we shall know why Montezuma thus tamely submitted to be made a prisoner. He may have some motives which we cannot fathom; I cannot believe him to be a coward. No Aztec monarch yet has ever shown want of courage."

Three or four days later another event occurred which heightened the fury of the Mexicans against the Spaniards. The cacique who had attacked the Spaniards on the coast arrived at Mexico, accompanied by his son and fifteen other chiefs who had acted with them. Montezuma referred the matter to the examination of Cortez. The cacique admitted the part he had taken in the attack on the Spaniards, and did not seek to shelter himself under royal authority until sentence of death was passed on him and the other chiefs, when they all declared that they had acted on the authority of Montezuma. They were condemned to be burnt alive in the space in front of the palace, and this sentence was carried out.

Not content with this, Cortez placed irons upon Montezuma himself, saying there could now be no longer a doubt as to his guilt. After the execution was carried out Montezuma was released from his fetters. The news of this insult to their monarch created a profound impression upon the Mexicans. Although they despised the weakness of a sovereign who appeared ready to suffer every indignity, and yet to retain an

appearance of courtesy and good will towards his oppressors, the bolder spirits determined that the nation should be no longer humiliated in the person of its sovereign, and that even should it cost Montezuma his life, an effort should be made to overthrow his oppressors.

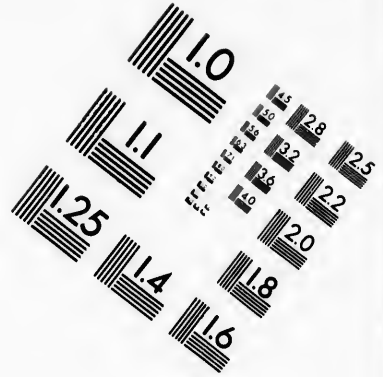
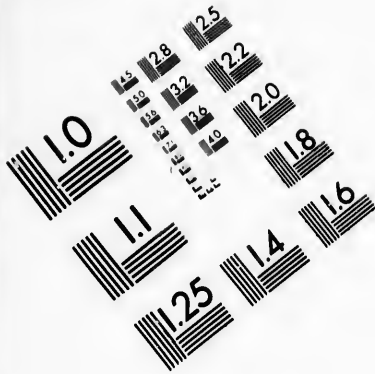
As soon as the news of the execution of the seventeen nobles, and of the indignity to Montezuma, was received by Cacama said to Roger :

"My friend, I can no longer retain you here. You have told me why you cannot have it proclaimed that you are of different blood to the Spaniards, and I quite understand your motives; but there are two reasons why in that case you must for a time return to the capital. My people would look upon me with scorn did I retain here as my friend one whom they regard as the countryman of the men who have so outraged us; moreover you yourself cannot wish to stay. You have told me that Cortez has charged you to acquaint him with the state of feeling in this city; and were you to remain here you would be placed in the painful position of either giving information which would ruin my plans, or of deceiving the man whom you nominally serve. I know that you would say nothing against me, but should I fail and the Spaniards triumph, Cortez would accuse you of being a traitor, and you would be put to death by him. Therefore, I think it in all ways best that you should return there for the present. You will, of course, inform Cortez that I have sent you back because the feeling against the white men, on account of their treatment of the emperor, is so great that I felt that I could not protect you against their fury."

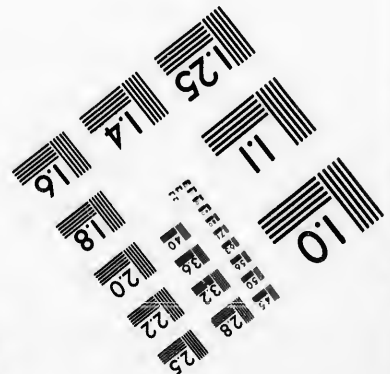
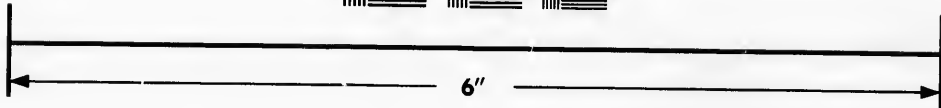
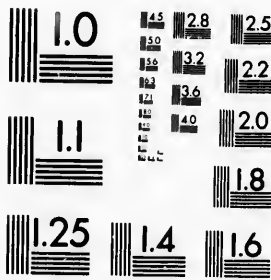
"I quite agree with you, Cacama. My position here has become a very painful one. I abhor as much as you do the doings of the Spaniards, and am perfectly ready to avow that I belong to another nation, and to join you in an enterprise against them."

"But that, as you have told me," Cacama said, "would cut off any chance of your ever being able to return to your own country."





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"I am ready to accept that," Roger said firmly. "In marrying your sister I shall become one of yourselves, and am ready to cast in my lot with you altogether."

The prince was silent for a minute or two. "No, Roger, I think that my plan is the best. Were you to do as you say, the Spaniards would be at once placed on their guard; while, save by the strength of your arm, you could aid but little in any enterprise against them. Moreover, if you return to the Spaniards, I shall have the satisfaction that, if I fall and ruin comes upon my house, you will take care of my sister, and that my wife will also have a protector. For all reasons, therefore, it is better you should go. But if aught is to be attempted against the Spaniards I will take care to give you notice, so that you can leave them in disguise and come here, and so avoid their fate."

Although Roger's own feelings would have led him to throw in his lot openly against the Spaniards he saw that Cacama's plan was the best. The boat was ordered to be at once got in readiness; and after a painful parting with Amenche, who wept bitterly, Roger left the palace, and again accompanied by Cuitcatl, in order to ensure his safety across the lake, was taken over to Mexico. He at once sought the presence of Cortez, and through Marina explained to him that Cacama had sent him back, fearing that in the excited state of the population harm might come to him. He had, since he had been in Tezcuco, sent a letter across each day to Cortez, saying that all was tranquil there; that the young king was pursuing his ordinary round of court ceremonial, and was certainly, as far as he could learn, taking no steps whatever towards interfering with the affairs of the capital, although the imprisonment of Montezuma had evidently made a painful impression upon him.

Cortez asked him a few questions, and when he left the room said to Marina: "That young fellow must be watched, Marina; he has been brought up with these people, and must to some extent feel with them. I know that he is a friend of yours, but see that you say nothing to him on public affairs.

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Let him be kept wholly in the dark as to our plans and intentions. This Cacama is, next to Montezuma, the most powerful and important of the Aztec chiefs. He is young and energetic, and although he has been so badly treated by Montezuma he resents our treatment of him. Had it been otherwise he would probably ere this have made some propositions to us, through Sancho, for a closer alliance with us, on the understanding that the territories Montezuma has taken from him shall be returned. We must have Cacama's actions closely watched. There are other Aztecs who are willing enough to act as our spies, and who will keep us informed of what is going on. Hitherto their reports have agreed with Sancho's, but from his sending the young fellow back here Cacama may now be intending to act against us."

Cacama, indeed, lost no time in setting to work, and began to form a league with many of the leading nobles, to rescue the emperor and destroy the Spaniards. Montezuma's brother Cuitlahua and many others agreed at once to join him, but the greater part of the Aztec nobles hung back, upon the ground that they did not like to move in the matter, without the orders of their emperor. Their refusal prevented any general rising taking place, and thus destroyed the last chance of Mexico retaining its independence. Cortez learnt from his spies what was going on, and would have marched against Tezcuco had not Montezuma dissuaded him, telling him that Cacama was a powerful prince, and would certainly be aided by many other chiefs, and that the enterprise would be hazardous in the extreme.

Cortez then endeavoured to negotiate, but received a haughty answer from Cacama. He then tried threats, asserting the supremacy of the Spanish emperor. Cacama replied "that he acknowledged no such authority, he knew nothing of the Spanish sovereign or his people, nor did he wish to know anything of them." Cortez then invited Cacama to come to Mexico to discuss their differences; but Cacama had no faith in Spanish loyalty, and he replied "that when he did visit the capital, it would be to rescue it as well as the emperor himself,

and their common gods from bondage. He should come, not with his hand upon his breast but on his sword, to drive out the Spaniards, who had brought such disgrace upon the country." While this had been going on, Montezuma had still further forfeited all claim to sympathy by the willingness with which he accepted the attentions of those who were in fact his gaolers. They paid him all the outward marks of respect, pretending still to regard him as a powerful sovereign; and he, in return, was present at their exercises and sports, took the greatest interest in two ships they were building for navigation on the lake, and in all respects behaved to them as if they were his best friends. He now carried his baseness still further, and informed Cortez that several of the Tezucan nobles were regularly in his pay, and that it would be easy through them to capture Cacama and thus break up the confederacy.

Cortez at once took means to carry out the suggestion. The traitors invited Cacama to a conference at a house overhanging the lake near Tezucno. Upon going there he was seized by them, bound, placed in a boat, and carried to Mexico. He was there brought before Montezuma. In spite of the perils of his position, Cacama bore himself nobly. He boldly accused his uncle of foul treachery, and with the cowardice which he had betrayed since the Spaniards had entered his kingdom. Montezuma handed him over to Cortez, who ordered him to be loaded with fetters and thrown into a dungeon. The emperor then issued an order, declaring that Cacama had forfeited his sovereignty by his rebellion, and that he therefore deposed him, and appointed a younger brother named Cuicuitzca in his place. The other leaders of the confederacy were all seized by the orders of Montezuma in their own cities, and brought in chains to the capital, where they were imprisoned with Cacama.

Upon Roger the news of Cacama's arrest and imprisonment came like a thunder-clap. He was in the habit of frequently seeing Malinche, who still retained the warm feeling of friendship for him that had originated at Tabasco, and with whom

he often had long talks of their life in those days ; but she had let no word drop as to the doings of Cacama. She had questioned him somewhat closely as to his relations with that prince ; and he had made no secret to her of the fact that Cacama had promised him his sister's hand in marriage. As many of the Spaniards had already married the daughters of great caciques, this appeared to her natural, and she had congratulated him upon the prospect of an alliance which would bring him wealth and land, but had said that for the present it would not do to think of marriage, as it would be unsafe for him to leave the capital. When therefore Roger heard of the misfortune that had befallen Cacama, he was filled alike with surprise and consternation, and hurrying to Malinche, begged her to use her influence with Cortez to spare the young prince's life.

"I have already done so," she said ; "and he has promised that no blood shall be shed, though the chiefs who have leagued themselves with Cacama must all be imprisoned ; the safety of the army requires it. No harm, however, shall befall Cacama, of that be assured ; I may tell you now, that it has been settled that his brother Cuicuitzca shall be appointed Lord of Tezucuo in his place. This will be done by a decree to-morrow."

"Malinche, I must go at whatever hazard to warn Cacama's wife and sister, in order to give them the opportunity of leaving the palace before this young prince arrives ; pray obtain for me leave from Cortez to go away for twenty-four hours. You can tell him of the interest I have in the matter."

"I will manage it for you," Malinche said ; "but as your princess is also sister to the new king, I see no reason for uneasiness."

"She is devoted to Cacama," Roger replied ; "and would not, I feel sure, consent to remain in the palace with the usurper."

"You had best advise her," Malinche said with a little nod of the head ; "to disguise her sentiments, and make the best of

the matter. It may make, you know, a good deal of difference in the amount of dowry you will get with her."

"I am not greedy, Malinche," Roger said; "but the present is, at any rate, no time for talking of marriage."

"Most of the officers have married," Malinche said.

"They may have done so, but they are officers, and can maintain their wives in all honour and respect; and have apartments allotted to them here. I have neither rank nor station, and shall certainly not ask my princess to share my rough quarters as a soldier. There is no hurry. As I told you but a year ago, Malinche, I am scarcely out of my boyhood; and there will be plenty of time when matters settle down, and we see what is going to happen, to think of marrying."

"I will go and speak to Cortez at once, and get leave for you. But you had best disguise yourself well—Tezcuco will be in an uproar to-night; for the capture of Cacama will be known there ere many hours, if it is not known already."

She soon returned with the required permission. This time Roger dressed himself in the attire of a trader, as being less likely to attract attention. Malinche again secured a boat for him, and having dyed his face and hands, he started at once, as it would be dark before he reached Tezcuco. Since Montezuma had been captive in their hands, there was no longer any fear of an attack being made upon the Spaniards, and the soldiers were now able to come and go through the town at pleasure.

Upon landing, Roger at once made his way to the palace. There was great excitement in the town. The people were assembled in crowds, discussing the news that had reached them; and even at the palace gate the guards were careless of their duty, and Roger entered without question. He hurried direct to the royal apartments. An official who would have barred his way allowed him to pass at once when he recognized his identity. When he entered he found a scene of grief and confusion; the queen was extended upon a couch weeping bitterly, while Amenche and some of her ladies, although themselves weeping, were trying to console her.

The princess gave a cry of joy when she saw him, and running forward threw herself into his arms.

"You have heard the news?" she exclaimed. "Cacama is lost. These monsters will put him to death."

"I can reassure you as to that," Roger said; "he is a captive, but his life is not in danger. Malinche has interceded for him, and Cortez has promised that his life shall be spared."

A cry of gladness burst from all present.

"I have other and less pleasant news to give you, Amenche," Roger whispered in her ear. "Get rid of all these ladies; my news must be for you only."

A minute or two later the queen dismissed her ladies. "The news I have to tell you," Roger went on, "is, that tomorrow Montezuma will issue a decree deposing Cacama, and appointing Cuicuitzca Lord of Tezcuco."

An exclamation of anger and indignation broke from the queen and Amenche.

"He cannot do it," the latter exclaimed passionately; "it is beyond his power. The emperor has a voice in the council, but beyond that he has no power to make or unmake the Lords of Tezcuco."

"At the present moment," Roger said gravely; "he has got the Spanish power at his back, or rather, he is but the mouthpiece of the Spaniards. They are the masters, and care nothing for the law or usages of your country."

"The Tezucans will not receive Cuicuitzca," Amenche said; "everyone knows that he is weak and cowardly, and of late he has been at Mexico, dancing attendance on the Spaniards. They will never receive him."

The queen raised her head from the couch. "We must not build on that, Amenche. He comes, sent here by the Whites, and when Mexico dares not rise against them you may be sure that the people here will not dare to provoke their anger. Besides, who have they to lead them? Was not Cacama betrayed by his own nobles? Let us send for Cuitcatl, and hear what he advises us."

Cuitcatl, on his arrival, was so thunderstruck on hearing that Montezuma had so debased himself to the Spaniards as to depose his own nephew, whose only fault was patriotism, and who had been endeavouring to effect his rescue, that he was for a minute or two speechless with indignation.

"The gods have, indeed, deserted us," he said, "when they have turned a monarch who was considered brave and honourable into a base slave. May their vengeance fall upon him! May the curse of our ruined country descend upon the man who is the real author of our misfortunes!"

"Do you think, Cuitcatl," Ameneche asked, "that the people will receive this usurper?"

"I fear, indeed, that they will do so," he replied. "Montezuma has appointed him, and Montezuma's name still has power. At any rate it will afford them an excuse for submission; besides, how could they fight when so many of our own nobles are treacherous? Doubtless Cacama will not be the only victim, and Montezuma will, at the orders of the Spaniards, disgrace all who have acted with him."

"Then what would you advise us to do? We are both resolved that we will not await the coming of this usurper."

"My house is at your service," Cuitcatl said; "it lies, as you know, near the foot of the hills; and whatever strife may go on here, its quiet is little likely to be invaded. Cuicuitzca will not concern himself at present with you, nor would he venture to take any hostile steps against you, for did he do so it would excite a storm of indignation. As to you, Princess, as his own sister, and of the royal blood, you could if you liked stay here, as at present; and, indeed, were it not that I am sure you would not leave the queen, I should advise you to do so, for you might then act in the interests of Cacama should you see an opportunity."

Ameneche shook her head: "No," she said, "brother though he is, I would not bend my head before a usurper while Cacama lives. When do you think we had better leave here?"

"I should say it were best to leave at once," Cuitcatl

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replied. "I will order three or four litters to be prepared for yourselves, and say two of your most trusted attendants. Bathalda will find in the town men on whom he can rely to take you. In this way none here will know where you have gone. I will have the litters in readiness at a short distance from the palace, and you can then issue out by the garden gate unobserved. I shall, of course, myself escort you."

"What shall we take with us, Cuitcatl?"

"I will get in addition to those who carry the litters five or six porters. These I will bring up through the gardens to the private door, and Roger and I will carry down to them such parcels of your clothes as you may make up. I should then make up two large caskets with your own jewels, those of Cacama, and some of the most valuable stones and jewels from the royal treasury—leaving all the royal ornaments worn on state occasions, so that the usurper will not know that any have been abstracted."

"I would rather take nothing but my own and Cacama's personal jewels," the queen said.

"The contents of the whole treasury are his by rights, and you must remember, Madam, that jewels may be very useful to you. You will have to work for Cacama, and unhappily there are many who are not insensible to bribes; and the possession of valuable jewels may enable you to be of great assistance to the king."

"I did not think of that," the queen said. "Yes, you are right. There is a hoard stowed away by the late king and by his father before him, its existence is only known to my husband and myself. I have never seen it, but Cacama tells me that it is of immense value, and was to be used only in case of an extreme emergency and danger to the state. We can take what we choose from this separate hoard, and Cuicuitzca will find from the list in the hands of the chief of the treasury that the royal store is untouched."

"That will be vastly better, indeed," Cuitcatl said; "it is well that he should have no possible cause of complaint against you. Where is this hidden receptacle?"

"Before I show it you I will send all our attendants to bed, save the two we will take with us—my own maid and Amenché's."

"I will be going. Roger Hawkshaw will help you," Cuitcatl said. "It will take some time for Bathalda to get the litters and the men. It is now ten o'clock; in three hours the litters shall be outside the little gate of the garden, and I will bring six porters to the private door at the foot of the stairs."

"That will be enough," the queen said; "two will be ample for our garments, and you and Roger Hawkshaw can take the jewels, which, when we start, can go in the litters with us."

Cuitcatl left. The two ladies who were to accompany the party were then called in, and informed of what had taken place, and that they had been chosen to accompany the queen and princess in their flight.

"Tell all the others," the queen said, "that we are overcome with the news we have received, and will dispense with all further attendance except your own for the night. When all is quiet, make up your jewels and such clothes as you may wish to bring in bundles; then go to the wardrobe-room and make up two bundles, each as much as a man can carry, of my garments and two of the same size of those of the princess; take all our jewels out of the caskets and put them in with our clothes."

When the two waiting-ladies had retired, the queen said to Roger: "Now come with me, and we will open the treasure closet."

The palace was by this time hushed and quiet, the greater part of the courtiers had long since left, having hurried away to their homes when the news came of Cacama's arrest, and the remainder had gone to friends in the town or neighbourhood, as it was thought probable that the Spaniards might at once send a force to take possession of the palace and arrest all found there.

Taking some keys from a strong coffer in Cacama's room, and bidding Roger take a torch from the wall, the queen led the way to the royal treasury. A massive door was first

unlocked, and in a large room were seen ranged vessels of gold and silver; strong boxes containing gold necklaces, armlets, and other ornaments; while on lower shelves were bars of gold and silver ready to be worked up. They passed through this room into another the same size, around it ran deep shelves, in which were piled the treasury papers with the accounts of the royal revenues and the tributes paid by the various cities and villages and land-owners of the kingdom. In one corner stood a small cupboard of about four feet high, also filled with papers. The queen put her hand inside and touched a small spring at the back.

"Now," she said to Roger; "pull at that corner of the cupboard."

He obeyed her instructions, and at a vigorous pull the cupboard, which had appeared solidly embedded in the wall, swung round on one of its angles. Nothing, however, was to be seen save a bare wall behind it.

"Now, Roger Hawkshaw, take your dagger and cut away that plaster—for it is but plaster, though it looks like stone."

Roger obeyed, the task was an easy one, for the plaster was but half an inch thick, and came off in flakes, showing a massive copper door three feet six in height, and three feet in width behind it. No keyhole was visible.

"Press upwards against the lintel," the queen said; "that will release the catch of the door."

Roger did so, and at the same moment pushed with his shoulder against the door, and it swung round with ease.

"Do you enter first with the torch, and we will follow," the queen said.

Roger found himself in a room about twelve feet square. At the farther end was a pile of gold bars four feet deep, and as much high, extending right across the room. On the floor, along the other two sides, were ranged a number of large chests.

"Open these," the queen said; "the gold is of no use to us."

The chests were full of manufactured gold ornaments, many of them studded with jewels.

Roger was astounded at the amount of wealth thus stored away.

"Cacama told me," the queen said, "that even the treasure-houses of Montezuma are poor in comparison to the treasure his grandfather and father stowed away here, and I can well believe it. You have not opened that small chest yet."

This was opened, and was found to contain a number of bags which were full of pearls, turquoise, and other precious stones, of large size and immense value.

"We will take this chest away as it stands," the queen said.

"It would be awkward to carry," Roger objected; "it is very heavy, and its shape would tell at once that it contained valuables. The contents do not weigh many pounds, and could easily be wrapped up in a cloth and put into one of the litters without exciting observation. If you will allow me, I will go back to one of the sleeping rooms and fetch two or three thick rugs."

He hurried away, and in a few minutes returned. The bags were transferred from the chest to one of the rugs he had brought, which was then wrapped round and tied into a bundle. On two other rugs were placed heaps of necklaces and other ornaments from the larger chests, until each contained, as nearly as Roger could guess by lifting them, some sixty pounds' weight of gold ornaments. These were similarly tied up, and the three bundles were then carried out from the hidden room, and conveyed to the apartment they had before left.

Roger then went back to the treasury, closed the copper door, swept up and placed in a rug every particle of plaster, and then swung the cabinet back into its position, where it fastened with a loud click. So firmly was it fixed, that, although Roger tried with his whole strength, it did not shake in the slightest; and the work was so admirably done, that, from the closest inspection, he was unable to discern aught that would have shown that the cabinet was not built into the wall. He then returned to where the ladies were waiting him.

The queen urged him to take two or three of the bags of jewels, but this he absolutely refused to do.

"I am acting as Cacama's friend," he said; "and as the promised husband of his sister, and I should feel myself degraded, indeed, were I to receive even one of those jewels."

"But there is no saying when we shall meet again," the queen said; "there is no knowing what terrible events may occur."

"Whatever occurs, lady, I shall see you again if I live," Roger said. "If not, of what use are the jewels to me?"

At the appointed hour Cuitcatl returned.

"All is in readiness," he said.

The two attendants were summoned from the apartments where they had been waiting. Roger and his friend first carried down the bundles of clothing, and then took up the rugs containing the heavy gold ornaments, Roger taking in addition the small parcel with the jewels. The attendants then took up their own bundles, and the whole party proceeded downstairs, and out into the garden. Cuitcatl led the way with the queen. Roger followed with Amenche, the two ladies with the porters came behind.

"How strange," Roger said; "last time I came at night through this garden, I was a fugitive, and you came down to bid me farewell: now it is you who have to fly!"

"When shall we meet again?" the girl sobbed.

"I cannot tell you, dear; but if I live we will meet again. Things may right themselves yet, and at least, whatever happens to this unfortunato country, we may be happy together. I have a good friend in Malinche, and if the Spaniards conquer, Cortez will certainly give me leave to marry you; it is his policy to marry his soldiers to the daughters of Mexicans. If Cortez fails, and the Spaniards are finally driven out, Cacama will recover his own again, and can then proclaim that I am not of Spanish birth, and can give you to me. So you see that whatever comes there is hope that things will go happily with us."

"I am afraid, Roger. I fear there is to be no happiness in this unfortunate country."

"Then we must leave it together," Roger said cheerfully. "You are naturally depressed now, and see things in their darkest light; but you will grow more hopeful again when you are once established in Cuiteatl's home. Arrange with him for Bathalda to act as messenger between us: he is faithful and brave, and will manage to reach me whatever comes of it."

A few minutes later they were beyond the gardens, the four litters stood ready, the queen and princess and the two ladies took their seats in them, and the three bundles of valuables were also placed inside.

"I shall love you—I shall love you until death," Amenche sobbed out, and then the procession moved away, leaving Roger standing by himself. Skirting the outside wall of the garden, he made his way to the shore of the lake.

He found the boatmen asleep in their canoe. As soon as he aroused them, they seized their paddles, and on his taking his seat pushed off.

"There is no occasion for speed," he said; "it is but two o'clock now, and it is of no use our reaching Mexico until daybreak, for the gates of the palace will be closed, and there will be no getting in, dressed as I am, until sunrise."

They therefore paddled quietly across the lake, often resting for a considerable time, and so arranging that they approached the city at the same time as a number of market boats from the villages on the lake.

"Well," Malinche asked with a smile, as he met her in one of the courts as he entered, "and where is your lady-love?"

"I have not brought her here," he said, rather indignantly. "You did not suppose that I was going to bring her back to a barrack-room; I am not an officer to have a suite of apartments to myself. Besides, if I could have had the whole palace to myself, I should not have asked her to forsake her sister-in-law in her distress. The two have fled together, and when the

usurper arrives there to-day, he will find that no one knows where they have gone. However, I hope he will not trouble himself about them; after having taken Cacama's place, he could hardly wish to have Cacama's wife there, and I think he will be very glad when he hears that she has left. Can I see Cacama? I should like to tell him that his wife is in safety."

"I will take you with me," Malinche said. "I saw him yesterday when he was brought before Montezuma; he is a gallant prince, and I grieve that misfortune has befallen him."

Malinche led the way to the prison-room where Cacama was confined. The sentries at the door passed her and her companion without hesitation, for they knew that her influence was supreme with Cortez, and that orders did not apply to her.

"I will come again for you in half an hour," she said, as the sentry unbolted the door.

Cacama was lying on a couch covered with rough mats. He sat up as the door opened, and leapt to his feet with an exclamation of satisfaction when he saw who his visitor was.

"I have been longing to see you, Roger," he said. "I knew that you would come to me as soon as you could. Have you heard that Montezuma has deposed me, and appointed Cuicuitzca Lord of Tezcuco?"

"I heard it yesterday afternoon, Cacama, and crossed at nightfall to Tezcuco with the news."

"You saw my wife?" Cacama asked eagerly. "How is she? How does she bear the blow?"

"She was lost in grief when I first arrived there, but the necessity for action aroused her. She and Aménche agreed that they would not await the coming of the usurper to-day. They left the palace secretly, under the charge of Cuitcatl, who had litters in readiness for them, and started for his house, which he placed at their disposal. None save two attendants, whom they took with them, knew that they had left; and should the usurper seek for them—which, Cuitcatl agreed with me, is not likely to be the case, as he will have enough to occupy his time and thoughts—it will be long

before he can find whither they have gone. I must tell you, Prince, that the queen last night opened the secret treasury, and took with her a considerable amount of the gold ornaments and the precious stones, so that she should have the means, if opportunity occur, of offering bribes either to the nobles of Tezcuco, or to your guards here."

"I would I were free but for an hour," Cacama said passionately; "I would make an example of the treacherous nobles who betrayed us. The queen has done well in going to the secret chamber. It was to be kept for an emergency, and never was there a greater emergency for Tezcuco than now. Still, there were a large number of jewels in the public treasury, which she might have taken without breaking in upon the hoard."

"She thought that Cuicuitzca would, on his arrival, inquire from the chief of the treasury if everything was untouched; if he had found that a large number of valuables had been taken, he would connect it with the flight, and would at once send in all directions to overtake them; whereas, if he found that everything were untouched, he would think no more of her."

"Quite right," Cacama agreed. "Yes, it was certainly better to open the secret chamber. It was closed up again, I hope; for I would not that all the treasure which my father and grandfather stored away should be wasted by Cuicuitzca, or fall into the hands of his greedy friends the Spaniards."

Roger informed him of the steps that had been taken, and that, with the exception of the fact that the plaster had been removed, all was exactly as before, and that the entrance could never be discovered unless the cupboard was torn from its place.

"There is little fear of that being done. All the shelves and fittings of the treasury are of the plainest wood, and offer no inducement to anyone to take the trouble to break them down. The treasury might be sacked a dozen times without its occurring to anyone to break down that solid cupboard in the corner."

Roger now told Cacama of the arrangement that had been made that Bathalda should act as messenger between himself and Aménche, and said he doubted not that on the following day the man would present himself.

"Have you any message to send to the queen?" he asked.

"Tell her that I am well, and that I am delighted to hear she has left the palace before Cuicuitzca arrives. Bid her on no account to try to stir up the false nobles in my favour, they would only betray her to Montezuma: and so long as the Spaniards are masters here it is useless to think of revolt elsewhere. I do not believe that this will last long. The Mexicans are patient and submissive, but there is a limit, and Montezuma has almost reached it. The time cannot be far off when the people will no longer endure the present state of things here; and when they rise they will overwhelm these Spanish tyrants, and then I shall be freed. I can wait for a few weeks, and I shall doubtless have companions here ere long."

The door now opened, and Malinche looking in told Roger that he must leave, as she was required by Cortez. Saying good-bye to Cacama, therefore, he returned to his quarters.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INSURRECTION.

CACAMA'S prognostication was speedily verified; for in the course of the next two or three days, all the nobles who had joined him in preparations for a rising were, by Montezuma's orders, arrested and sent in in chains, and were placed with him in prison. Bathalda came on the day after Roger's return, with the news that the two ladies had reached Cuitcatl's house in safety, and, as they believed, without exciting observation. The queen was anxious to know if he had seen Cacama, and whether her husband had

any instructions for her. Amenche simply sent him some flowers gathered by her own hand. Roger gave Bathalda Cacama's message to the queen. While out in the market, he purchased a large packet of choice and delicate sweetmeats, of which he knew Amenche was particularly fond, and gave them to Bathalda, with the message that he would some day teach her to read and write, and then when they were away from each other, they could talk at a distance.

For some little time things went on quietly, but the Spanish greed and bigotry gradually worked the Mexicans up to a point of fury. At the suggestion of Cortez, Montezuma sent collectors to all the principal cities and provinces, accompanied by Spaniards, and these brought back immense quantities of gold and silver plate and other valuables, and to these Montezuma added an enormous treasure that had been accumulated and hidden by his father, amounting to a sum which astounded even the Spaniards. The value of the gold alone was equal to nearly a million and a half pounds sterling in the present day, besides a vast amount of gold ornaments and jewellery, and feather-work of excellent manufacture. A fifth of this was set aside for the King of Spain, the rest divided among the officers and soldiers.

Even the extortion of this vast sum from the people might have been passed over in quiet had the Spaniards been content to abstain from interference with their religion, but during the weeks that had elapsed since Montezuma had been a prisoner in their hands, they had vainly endeavoured to convert the emperor and the nobles and attendants on him to Christianity. They had listened attentively to the preaching and exhortations of Father Olmedo; but their faith in their own gods was unshaken, the bloody sacrifices were carried on as usual in the temples, and these horrible spectacles naturally excited the wrath and indignation of the Spaniards to the utmost, although they themselves had in Cuba and the islands put to death great numbers of the natives in pursuance of their own religious views. Cortez, with many of his leaders, went to the emperor, and told him that they would no longer

consent to have the services of their religion conducted in the palace, but wished to celebrate them publicly; and therefore requested that the great temple should be handed over to them for their services.

Montezuma was much agitated; he was a devout believer in his gods, and his conduct towards the Spaniards had been in no slight degree influenced by the belief that their coming had been foretold by Quetzalcoatl, and that they were the descendants of that god. However, after a conference with the priests, he consented that they should occupy one of the sanctuaries on the summit of the temple. Great joy was caused among the Spaniards at this permission. They at once took possession of the sanctuary, and thoroughly cleansed it; they then decorated its walls with flowers, and raised an altar, surmounted by a crucifix, and an image of the Virgin. When all was ready the whole army moved up the winding ascent to the summit, and a solemn Mass was celebrated.

The result of this occupation of the temple of their god was soon visible in the conduct of the Mexicans. Montezuma himself became grave and distant towards the Spaniards; and a few days later sent for Cortez, and informed them that they were in great danger, and that they had best leave the country at once. Cortez replied that he should regret to leave the capital so suddenly, when he had no ship to take him from the country; but that if he should be driven to take such a step he should feel compelled to carry the emperor along with him.

Montezuma then agreed to send at once a number of workmen to the coast to build vessels under the instructions of the Spaniards, and promised to use his authority to restrain his people, assuring them that the Spaniards would leave as soon as means were provided. A large number of artisans were accordingly sent off at once, with some of the Spaniards most skilled in ship-building, and on their arrival at the coast they began to fell trees, and to make all preparations for building the vessels.

In the meantime at Mexico every precaution was taken by the Spaniards. Since Montezuma had been in their hands they

had felt in perfect security, had wandered about the city and neighbouring country as they chose, fished upon the lake, and hunted in the royal preserves. Now the utmost vigilance was observed, strong guards were mounted, the soldiers slept in their armour with their arms beside them, and were no longer permitted to leave the palace.

At this moment news arrived that filled the mind even of Cortez with consternation. The expedition that he felt sure Velasquez, the Governor of Cuba, would despatch against him, had arrived on the coast, and had landed. It consisted of eighteen vessels, carrying nine hundred men, of whom eighty were cavalry. So large a fleet had never before been collected in the Indies. It was commanded by a Castilian noble, named Panfilo de Narvaez. Until they arrived at the coast they had learnt very little of what was happening in Mexico, as the vessels which Cortez had despatched had avoided touching at the islands. They now learnt from the Spaniards left on the coast all that had taken place; and Narvaez found with indignation that Cortez was the conqueror of a great empire, and that the honour and wealth had been reaped by a man whom he considered as an insolent adventurer, instead of by Velasquez. He therefore at once proclaimed his intention to march against Cortez, and to punish him for his rebellion, and the natives who had flocked to his camp soon comprehended that the new army had arrived as enemies, and not as friends, of the white men who had preceded them.

A small body of the troops of Cortez, commanded by Sandoval, were in garrison at Villa Rica; and he at once despatched a messenger with the news to Cortez and prepared for a vigorous defence. A priest, a noble, and four Spaniards who arrived from Narvaez, ordering him to surrender, were bound, placed on the backs of Indian porters, and sent off to Mexico under a strong guard.

When the news of the arrival of the force of Narvaez reached Mexico the soldiers were delighted, believing that means were now at their disposal for their return home; but when they heard from their officers that the new-comers were

sent by the Governor of Cuba, and had assuredly arrived as enemies, the troops declared that come what might, they would remain true to their leader.

On the arrival of the prisoners, Cortez received them with the greatest courtesy, apologized for the rough conduct of Sandoval, and loading them with presents converted them into allies. He learned from the priest that the soldiers of Narvaez had no hostility towards them, and that the arrogance of their leader caused much discontent among them.

When he was sure of the good offices of the priest, Cortez sent him back with a friendly letter to Narvaez, whom he adjured to lay aside his hostile designs, which if persisted in might cause the loss of all the conquests he had made. He was ready, he said, to greet him as a brother, and to share with him the fruits of his successes. The priest fulfilled his mission, and added his own advice that the offers of Cortez should be accepted. Narvaez rejected the counsel with scorn, but the accounts of the priest of the splendour of the country, the rich spoils won by the soldiers, and also of the generosity and popularity of Cortez, exercised a great influence over the soldiers.

The priest was followed by Father Olmedo with some more letters. These were similarly rejected by Narvaez, but Olmedo during his stay at the camp, contrived largely to add to the feeling in favour of Cortez, by his eloquence and the numerous presents he distributed among the officers and soldiers. Cortez had some time before despatched Don Velasquez de Leon, one of his trusted officers, with a hundred and fifty men, to plant a colony near the mouth of one of the great rivers. He was a kinsman of the Governor of Cuba, and Narvaez had on landing sent to him begging him to quit the service of Cortez and march with his troops to join him.

Velasquez, instead of doing so, set out at once for Mexico, but on his way was met by a messenger from Cortez, who ordered him to stop at Cholula for further orders. Cortez summoned a force of two thousand natives from the distant province of Chinantla, and leaving Pedro d'Alvarado in

command of a hundred and fifty Spaniards in Mexico, marched with the remainder of his force, consisting of some seventy men only, for Cholula.

Here he was joined by Velasquez with his hundred and fifty men. Thus reinforced they marched to Tlascala, where six hundred native troops joined him. But his allies soon fell off. They had had too severe an experience of the fighting powers of the white men to care about taking part in a battle with them, and so many deserted on the way that Cortez dismissed the rest, saying that he would rather part with them then than in the hour of trial. On reaching Perote they were joined by Sandoval with fifty Spaniards, which brought their number up to two hundred and sixty-six, only five of whom were mounted. On their march towards Cempoalla, where Narvaez had now established his headquarters, they were met by an embassy from him, requiring the acknowledgment by Cortez of his authority, offering at the same time that all who wished to leave should be transported in his vessels.

By liberal presents Cortez won over the members of the embassy, who returned to Cempoalla to inform the soldiers there of the liberality of Cortez, and of the wonderful array of gold ornaments and chains worn by his soldiers. Narvaez advanced to meet Cortez, but the weather proving bad again fell back on Cempoalla. Cortez, on the other hand, took advantage of the weather, and in the night fell upon the garrison, and took them completely by surprise.

Sandoval, with a small band, had been told off to attack the temple occupied by Narvaez, and to take him prisoner. The general, with the troops in the temple, defended himself bravely until seriously wounded by one of the long spears with which Cortez had armed his men. The thatched roof of the temple was set on fire, the defenders were driven out by the smoke, and Narvaez was seized and made prisoner. Another division under Olid fell upon the guns, captured them, and turned them upon the temples in which the troops were quartered, when the soldiers, whose loyalty to their commander had already been sapped, accepted the offer of Cortez of an

amnesty for the past, and a full participation in the advantages of the conquest of the country. Having sworn allegiance to Cortez as captain-general they were incorporated in his little army.

In the morning, when they saw how small had been the body of men who had defeated them, many regretted the course they had taken, but in the course of the day the two thousand native allies from Chinantla arrived, and their military appearance, and the proof afforded by their presence of the influence of Cortez with the inhabitants of the country, put a stop to the murmuring, especially as Cortez ordered all the spoils taken from them to be returned, and distributed among them considerable sums of money—exciting, indeed, murmurs of discontent among his own veterans, who considered that they had been deprived of the spoil they had rightfully won.

The eloquence of their general, however, as usual, was successful in pacifying them; but to prevent further difficulties, he broke up his force, and sent off two hundred men under Diego de Ordaz and a similar number under Velasquez de Leon, to form settlements on the coasts and rivers, and two hundred men to Vera Cruz to dismantle the fleet of Narvaez. Scarcely had these parties left, when a messenger arrived with letters from Alvarado, saying that the Mexicans had risen and assaulted the Spaniards in their quarters, and had partly undermined the walls, and that in the fighting several of the garrison had been killed and a great number wounded. Cortez at once despatched messengers after Velasquez and Ordaz, and ordered them to march to join him at Tlascala, recalled a hundred men from Vera Cruz, and then set forward.

The troops suffered much in their march across the low country to the foot of the hills, beneath a sun of terrible power. However, they reached Tlascala, and were there joined by Ordaz and Velasquez. They were most hospitably entertained by their allies, and a number of levies joined them, and with these and eleven hundred Spaniards, of whom a hundred were cavalry, they marched towards Mexico. They took a more northern route than before, and crossing the mountains held

their way on to Tezcuco. Upon their route through the plains the peasantry held aloof, and the greater portion of the population of Tezcuco withdrew before their arrival, and even its new lord, although appointed at the instigation of Cortez, was absent from the city. Despatches arrived from Alvarado saying that the Mexicans had for the last fortnight ceased their attacks, but were blockading him in the palace.

Cortez marched down the lake shore on the following day and crossed the causeway to the city. Not a native was to be seen near the line of march, not a boat was visible on the lake, and an air of gloom and solitude hung over everything, showing but too plainly the altered feelings with which the natives regarded the Whites. The streets were similarly deserted. When the head of the column reached the palace the gates were thrown open and the garrison rushed out to greet the new-comers with joyful shouts.

Cortez now learned the reason of the rising of the Mexicans. It was the result of a hideous act of treachery on the part of Alvarado. In the month of May was the great festival of the war god, which was held in his great temple, and the caciques asked permission of Alvarado to use for the day that portion which had been handed over to the Spaniards. He agreed to the request on the condition that the Aztecs should celebrate no human sacrifices, and should come unarmed. At least six hundred nobles attended in their most gorgeous robes, and Alvarado and his soldiers were present as spectators. While the Aztecs were employed in a religious dance, Alvarado gave the signal, his men rushed upon them with their arms, and every one of them was massacred unresistingly, not a single soul escaping.

Various motives were assigned for this most foul massacre; some writers have ascribed it solely to the desire for plunder; others to the desire of Alvarado to strike a blow that would intimidate the Mexicans from making any insurrectionary movement. Alvarado himself declared that he had information that the Mexicans intended to rise, but he gave no proofs whatever to justify his suspicions. The affair, indeed, seems

to have been utterly indefensible, and must ever remain a foul blot upon Spanish honour.

Cortez was extremely angry at hearing what had taken place, and after listening to Alvarado's explanation, said: "You have done badly; you have been false to your trust! Your conduct has been that of a madman!"

It was, however, no time for quarrels; and as it was the impolicy of the deed, rather than its treachery, that angered Cortez, he speedily forgave the offender, who was one of the most popular officers in his army.

The blow Alvarado had struck had a contrary effect to that which he had expected of it. No sooner had the news of the massacre spread through the city than the whole population rose, and at dawn next morning they attacked the palace with desperate fury. Volumes of missiles were poured upon the defenders. The walls were assaulted, and the works set on fire, and the palace might have been taken had not Montezuma, yielding to the entreaties—and perhaps threats—of the garrison, mounted the walls, and urged the people to desist from the attack, as his own safety would be imperilled did they continue it.

They obeyed him as usual, and withdrew from the assault, but threw up works round the place and proceeded to starve the Spaniards out. The latter had considerable stores of food, but suffered severely from thirst until they were fortunate enough to discover a spring, and were thus enabled to hold out until the arrival of Cortez.

The latter refused to comply with the request of Montezuma to see him. He had some reason to doubt the good faith of the emperor, for he had discovered that the latter had sent envoys to Narvaez; and he had upon his arrival at Tlascala been informed that the rising at Mexico had been to a great extent prepared beforehand by the orders of Montezuma, and even the assurances of the officers of the garrison that they owed their safety to the emperor's intervention did not pacify him. The real reason, no doubt, of his anger was that he found he had overrated the advantages he would gain from

Montezuma being in his hands; but for this he himself, and not the emperor, was to blame.

At first the capture had all the success that he had expected from it. The people had obeyed their emperor as implicitly when a captive as when his power had been supreme; they had sent in their nobles prisoners and bound at his orders; they had built ships for these strangers; they had suffered them to go unmolested through the country; but there was an end even to Aztec patience.

The avarice of the white men had drained the country of its wealth; their arrogance had humiliated their pride; their occupation of their holiest temple and the insults to their gods had aroused them to fury, and the massacre in cold blood of six hundred of their nobles while engaged in religious devotions had been the signal for an explosion.

Their emperor, formerly so venerated, they now regarded with contempt, as the creature of the Spaniards, as the betrayer of his country, and the thought of his safety no longer restrained their thirst for vengeance.

Cortez, however, was in no mood to reflect.

"What have I to do with this dog of a king," he exclaimed, "who suffers us to starve before his eyes? Go, tell your master and his people," he said, fiercely, to the Mexicans, "to open the markets, or we will do it for them at their cost!"

The chiefs, who were the bearers of Montezuma's message, left his presence in deep resentment, and reported to the emperor and to the people outside the manner in which Montezuma's request for an interview had been refused. Cortez, however, thought it politic to release Cuitlahua, Montezuma's brother, who had been among those imprisoned for taking share in Cacama's league, and allowed him to go into the city, thinking that he would allay the tumult. But Cuitlahua was a man of different spirit from his brother, he was heir-presumptive to the throne and a bold and daring prince. The people welcomed him at once as Montezuma's representative, and chose him to represent the emperor during his confinement. Cuitlahua accepted the post, and immediately

set to work to organize the fighting men and to arrange a plan of attack.

Roger had not been with the party that accompanied Cortez on his expedition against Narvaez, but with his two companions remained to form part of the garrison of the palace.

"You are out of spirits, young fellow," Juan said on the day after Cortez had marched away; "you are changed very much since you first joined us."

"I have much to make me so, Juan," Roger replied, in his broken Spanish: "you see I am white by blood, but I have dear friends among the natives. What do I see? As a white I perceive that our position here is one of the gravest danger, and that destruction may fall upon us all. As a friend of the natives I see the country plundered, the people trodden down, and sooner or later the ruin and misery of the whole people."

"You mean we are in danger from Narvaez's people," Juan said. "I have faith in Cortez: he will either fight them or bring them over. He is a wonderful man, and will find some way out of the difficulty."

"I do not mean that entirely" Roger replied; "I mean that there is danger from the natives."

"Pooh!" the old soldier said disdainfully. "The natives are no better than so many women."

"But even women may be serious opponents when they are fifty to one, Juan; and you mistake these Mexicans. They have been friendly and submissive, because it has been the order of the emperor, but although physically not strong they are brave. The Aztec army has spread the dominion of Mexico over a wide extent of country; they have conquered many peoples, and are by no means to be despised. It is true you beat the Tlascalans, but that was not because you were braver than they were, but because of your superior arms and armour, and above all by the terror inspired by your horses—but this will not last; the Mexicans now know that you are but men, like themselves; and when they fight, inspired both by national spirit and the

memory of their wrongs, I tell you that you will have hard work to hold your own."

"Ah well;" Juan grumbled; "if it must come it must, it will not disturb my appetite."

When Roger learned that orders had been given for the massacre at the temple, he determined firmly that he would take no part in the deed, whatever it might cost him to refuse. Fortunately he found no difficulty in persuading one of the soldiers, told off to act as a guard at the palace during the absence of the rest, to change places with him, as the man wanted to have his share in the expected plunder. Had Cacama been at liberty, Roger would not have hesitated a moment, but would have left the Spaniards and thrown in his lot with the Mexicans; but now it was impossible to do so. The frenzied population would have seized any white man they came upon outside the walls of the palace, and would have carried him to the altars of their gods.

It would be hopeless to endeavour to explain that he was of another race. All white men would be alike in their eyes. He bitterly regretted now that he had returned from Tezucuo. Had he at that time gone with the queen and princess to the house of his friend Cuitcatl, he could have remained there in quiet, and the natives would have seen that he, at least, had no part or share in this horrible massacre. Now it seemed to him, that there was nothing to be done, save to share the lot of the Spaniards, whatever that might be. He believed that the Mexicans would storm the palace, and slaughter all within it, long before the return of Cortez, and he by no means shared the confident anticipation of the soldiers, that the general on his arrival would very speedily put down any insurrection that might occur, and would with the assistance of the soldiers of Narvaez soon bring all Mexico into subjection.

It had happened that both Juan and Pedro had also been on guard during the massacre. This was a great satisfaction to him, for he felt he could no longer have remained in intimate communion with them, had their hands been drenched with innocent blood. When, upon their being relieved at their

posts, they joined each other in the chamber they shared in common, the old soldier held up his hand and said gruffly:—

"Do you hold your tongue, Sancho. I know what you are thinking, lad, as well as if you said it; and maybe I do not disagree with you, but least said soonest mended. These rooms without doors are not places for a man to relieve his mind by strong language, if he happens to differ from his superiors. It is a bad business and a shameful one. At Cholula there was some excuse for it; here there is none. I am an old soldier, and have taken many a life in my time, but never in cold blood like this. Say nothing, lad, at any rate until you get a chance of being outside this city, or on the lake, where none can get near you—then pour it out as much as you like."

"It is like enough," Roger said, "that none of us will ever go out of the city alive, and it will serve us thoroughly right. If this is to be a Spaniard and a Catholic let me be a Mexican and a heathen."

"There, there, that is enough," Juan interrupted. "Now let us have our supper."

"I can eat nothing," Roger said, throwing himself down on the couch, where he remained in silence until a sudden outburst of wild shouts and cries, followed instantly by the trumpet calling every man to his allotted place on the walls aroused him.

"The work of vengeance has begun," he said, gravely, as he put on his thick padded jerkin and helmet, and took up his pike. "I only hope I may see Alvarado, the author of this massacre, killed before I am."

Juan shook his head as Roger left the room, and he followed with Pedro.

"In faith I do not blame him, he has been brought up among these people."

"He is quite right," the young soldier said: "it is a shameful business. Had I known that we were coming here to be butchers I would never have taken service under Cortez. What should we have said if, on our first arrival here, when

Montezuma entertained Cortez and all the cavaliers, his people had slain them at the feast?"

"Hold your tongue, you young fool!" Juan muttered angrily. "The thing is done, and you cannot undo it. What we have to do now is to fight for our lives; even if these poor devils have right on their side, it is not a matter to stop and discuss now; so keep your breath for fighting. I doubt not that we shall soon scatter them like chaff."

But this was by no means the case, and it was only the intervention of Montezuma that saved the garrison from destruction.

The time until the arrival of Cortez had passed slowly. The soldiers, weakened by hunger and thirst, muttered angrily against the officer who had so rashly brought them into this strait. Few of them regretted the deed for its own sake, but simply because it had brought on them peril and misfortune. Roger had borne his share of the fighting on the walls. He was defending his life, and although at first he had fought with little ardour, the pain given by two arrows which pierced his cotton armour heated his blood, and he afterwards fought as stoutly as the rest.

During the period of inaction he had more than once tried to obtain an interview with Cacama; but the prisoners were jealously watched, and no one was allowed access to them on any pretext, and two officers always accompanied the men who took in their daily rations. They were regarded as hostages, only less important than Montezuma himself; and as most of them were very rich and powerful caciques, they might offer bribes which might well shake the fidelity of any private soldier.

When the news arrived that Cortez, with the whole of the army of Narvaez, was at hand, the depression that had reigned gave way to exultation, and the soldiers believed that they would now take the offensive, and without loss of time put an end to the insurrection.

Marina had accompanied Cortez on his expedition, for she was still necessary to him as an interpreter, and her influence

with the natives was great. Roger obtained an interview with her a few hours after her return. She had evidently been crying passionately.

"My heart is broken, Roger," she said. "I had hoped that the white men would have done great things for my country. They know so much, and although I thought there might be trouble at first, for great changes can never be introduced without trouble, I never dreamt of anything like this. Cholula was bad enough; but there the people brought it on themselves, and the Spaniards would have been slain had they not first begun to kill; but here it is altogether different. It was an unprovoked massacre, and after this, who can hope that the Whites and Mexicans can ever be friendly together? I love Cortez, he is great and generous, and had he been here this would have never happened; but many of his people are cruel, and they are all greedy of wealth, and he, general though he is, has to give way to them.

"I remember that in the old days at Tabasco you told me how cruelly the Spaniards had treated the people of the islands; but when I saw them first, I thought that you, being of a different nation, had spoken too hardly of them. I see, now, that you were right. I have all along done what I could for my people, and though I am with the invaders, I am sure they recognize this, and that they feel no ill-will against me; but now I fear that they will curse me as they will curse them, and that through all time my name will be abhorred in Mexico," and she again burst into tears.

"I do not think so, Malinche. At Tezcuco it was always said that you stood between the natives and the Whites, and it was owing to you that they were not more harsh than they were. As to this massacre, God forbid that I should say a single word in defence of it! As a white man and a Christian, I feel it is an act of horrible atrocity; but it should not make such an impression upon your people, who make wars solely to obtain victims whom they may sacrifice at the altars of their gods; and who every year slay in cold blood fully twenty-five thousand people who have done them no wrong. By the side

of such horrible slaughter as this the murder of six hundred the other day was but a drop in the ocean of blood annually shed here."

"Had it been in battle it would have been nothing," Malinche said. "Had they offered them up at the altars of the gods, the people would have understood it, for they do it themselves; but this was a foul act of treachery. Who, after this, can believe in the promises of the Whites? I know the people. You Whites despise them because they have hitherto allowed themselves to be subdued without resistance; but now that their first awe of the Spaniards has died away, and that they have nerved themselves to take up arms, you will find that they are brave. I see nothing but trouble before us. Cortez feels confident that he can easily repulse any attack, and subdue the city and the country round; but I do not think so."

"Nor do I, Malinche. No men could have fought more bravely than the Mexicans the other day. It is true that we were but in small numbers, and that we are now many times stronger, and have Cortez to command us; but on the other hand, the attack was but a hasty one, and the next time we shall have the whole Mexican force upon us."

"What will you do, Roger?"

"I must fight for the Spaniards," Roger said gloomily. "They are not my countrymen, but they are white men as I am, and surrounded by foes; besides, I have no option. The Mexicans cannot distinguish between Spaniards and Englishmen, and I should be seized and sacrificed were I to set foot beyond the walls. Were it not for that I would leave the city, join Amerche, and leave the Spaniards and Mexicans to fight out their quarrel as they might; but now whichever won the result would be fatal to me. If the Mexicans were victorious, I, like all other Whites, would be sacrificed to their gods; if the Spaniards won I should be executed as a traitor. Therefore, there is nothing for me to do but to remain with the Spaniards, and share their fate, whatever it may be."

The next morning silence reigned over the city, not a Mexican was to be seen anywhere near the palace, within

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THE MESSENGER RETURNS AT A GALLOP WOUNDED
IN A SCORE OF PLACES,



which the Spaniards were virtually prisoners. Cortez hoped however, that Cuitlahua would soon persuade the people to return to their usual habits, and to open the markets for provisions; but in any case he felt so confident of his power to overawe the city, that he sent off a messenger with despatches to the coast, saying that he had arrived safely, and should soon overcome all opposition. In half-an-hour, however, the messenger returned at a gallop wounded in a score of places. He reported that the city was up in arms, the drawbridges were raised, and the Mexicans were marching towards the palace.

Scarcely had he arrived when the sentinels on the towers shouted that masses of men were approaching by all the streets leading to the palace, and immediately afterwards the terraces and flat roofs of the houses near were darkened by throngs of natives, shouting and brandishing their weapons. The trumpet instantly sounded to arms, and so strict was the discipline that prevailed, that in an incredibly short time every soldier was at his post. The position was capable of being defended against a very numerous enemy unprovided with artillery, for the wall round the great one-storied building though low was strong, and the turrets, placed at intervals upon it, enabled the defenders to command its face, and to pour missiles upon any who might be bold enough to endeavour to effect a breach by undermining it with crowbars and levers. The garrison, too, were sufficient for its defence, for there were not only some twelve hundred Spaniards, but the eight thousand Tlascalan allies.

The Aztecs rushed forward with the shrill whistle used as a battle-cry by the people of Anahuac, and as they advanced poured a rain of missiles of all kinds upon the palace, to which were added those shot from the terraces and flat roofs.

The Spaniards had pierced the walls with embrasures for their cannon, and these commanded all the avenues. The gunners waited until the columns were close at hand, and then their terrible discharge swept lanes through the crowded masses in the streets. For a moment the Mexicans paused, paralyzed

by the terrible slaughter, and then rallying rushed forward again. Three times the cannon were discharged into their midst, but though broken and disordered, they still pressed on until they swept up to the very foot of the walls, pouring in a hail of arrows.

They were well seconded by those on the house-tops, who from their elevated position were on a level with the Spaniards, and whose missiles, arrows, javelins, and stones thrown with great force from slings, galled the defenders greatly, and wounded great numbers of them. In vain did the Aztecs strive to climb the walls. These were of no great height, but as they showed their heads above the parapet, they were shot down by the Spanish arquebus men, or struck backwards by the weapons of the Tlascalans. Failing to scale the walls, they tried to batter down the parapet with heavy pieces of timber, but the stonework was too strong; and they then shot burning arrows into the palace, and hurled blazing torches over the wall.

The palace itself was of stone, but some of the exterior works which had been constructed were of wood, and these were soon on fire. The defenders had no water with which to extinguish the flames, and at the point where the new works joined the wall the fire was so fierce that they were afraid it would spread to the palace; and to extinguish it were forced to adopt the desperate expedient of overthrowing the wall upon the burning mass. The breach thus made was guarded by a battery of heavy guns and a party of arquebusiers, and these repelled every attempt of the Mexicans to take advantage of the breach which had been thus formed.

The fight continued until night fell, and the Mexicans then drew off. Cortez and his followers were astonished at the obstinacy with which they had fought and the contempt of death they had displayed. They had obtained such easy victories with forces but a fourth of those which Cortez now commanded that he had formed the lowest opinion of the fighting powers of the Aztecs. But he now found that a nation was not to be trampled upon with impunity. However, he consoled himself

with the thought that this was but a temporary outbreak of fury, and he determined to sally out with all his force on the following morning, and to inflict a terrible chastisement upon his assailants.

As soon as the morning broke the Spaniards were under arms. Cortez was speedily undeceived in his hopes that the slaughter of the previous day would have cowed the Mexicans. The great square and the streets leading to it were seen to be crowded with foes who appeared better organized than on the previous day, being divided into regiments, each with its banners. These, the Mexican attendants on Montezuma told them, were the cognizances of the many cities of the plain, showing that the whole people were joining in the movement commenced by those of the capital. Towering above the rest was the royal standard of Mexico. Among the crowd were numerous priests who, with excited gestures, called upon them to avenge the insulted gods, and to destroy the handful of invaders who had brought disgrace upon the nation, had trampled it under foot, had made their sovereign a captive, and murdered their nobles in cold blood.

It was evident that fierce as had been the fighting on the previous day the renewed assault would be even more formidable.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RISING IN MEXICO.

THE appearance of the vast crowd that surrounded the palace differed much from that which they had presented on the previous day, when the Mexicans had fought in their usual garments or in their padded cuirasses. To-day they had laid aside all their garments save their loin-cloths, having found by experience that their cotton armour was absolutely useless against the missiles of the Spaniards. The chiefs were now conspicuous as they moved to and fro

among the dark masses, by their gay dresses and the metal breastplates worn over the bright feather-work. They wore helmets made to resemble the heads of ferocious wild beasts, crested with bristly hair or surmounted by bright feather plumes. Some were only a red fillet round their head, having tufts of cotton hanging from it, each tuft denoting some victory in which they had taken part, and their own rank in the army. Noble and citizen, priest and soldier, had all united in the common cause.

The assault was about to commence when the Spaniards' artillery and musketry poured death into the crowded ranks; the gates were at once thrown open, and Cortez at the head of his cavalry dashed out followed by the infantry and the Tascalcan allies. Confused by the slaughter made by the fire-arms the Aztecs could offer no resistance to the onslaught. The cavalry trampled them under foot and mowed them down with sword and lance. The Spanish foot and Tascalcans following close behind carried on the work of destruction, and it seemed to the Spaniards that the fight was already over when the Aztecs fled before them.

The movement of retreat, however, ceased the moment the Mexicans reached the barricades which they had thrown up across the streets; and forming behind these they made a gallant stand, while those upon the housetops poured showers of arrows, darts, and great stones down upon the advancing Spaniards. In vain the Spanish artillery were brought up, and their fire swept away the barricades: there were still others behind, and at each the desperate fight was renewed. Coming down from the side streets the Aztecs fell upon the Spanish flanks, and clouds of missiles were shot from the boats which crowded the canals everywhere intersecting the streets.

Cortes and his cavaliers continued to make desperate charges through the Aztecs, who, although unable to withstand the weight and impetus of the horses, closed round them, striving to throw the riders from their backs and to stab the horses themselves—throwing away their lives without hesitation on the chance of getting one blow at the Spaniards. The

moment the horsemen drew back, the Aztecs followed them, and although their loss was immense their ranks were instantly filled up again, while the Spaniards could ill spare the comparatively small number who fell on their side.

At last after hours of carnage, the Spaniards, exhausted by their exertions, and having eaten nothing since the night before, fell back to the palace. Diaz, one of the historians of the events, who was present at the combat, expressed the astonishment felt by the Spaniards at the desperation with which the despised Mexicans had fought. "The Mexicans," he said; "fought with such ferocity that if we had had the assistance of ten thousand Hector and as many Orlando we should have made no impression on them. There were several of our troops who had served in the Italian wars, but neither there nor in the battles with the Turk have they ever seen anything like the desperation shown by these Indians."

As the Spaniards fell back, the Aztecs followed them, pouring in volleys of stones and arrows; and as soon as they had entered the palace encamped around it, showing that their spirit was wholly unbroken. Although—as it was contrary to their custom to fight at night—they did not renew the attack, they shouted insulting threats as to the Spaniards' fate when they should fall into their hands, and were evidently well satisfied with the events of the day and looked for victory on the morrow.

Cortez had received a severe wound in the hand during the fight, and he and his companions felt how grievously they had mistaken the character of the Aztecs. They had sallied out that morning confident in their power to crush out the insurrection; they returned, feeling that their situation was well-nigh desperate, and that henceforth they must fight, not for dominion but for life.

As soon as day broke the fight was renewed, but this time it was the Aztecs and not the Spaniards who began it. There was no idea of a fresh sortie, "all that the garrison could hope was to defend their position. So furiously did the natives

attack, that, for a time, they forced their way into the entrenchments; but the Spaniards, whose turn it was to fight with the bravery of despair, fell upon them with such fury that none of those who had gained an entry returned.

Cortez now sent to Montezuma, to request him to interpose as he had done before between them and his people. The emperor refused to interfere. He had viewed the desperate fighting of the last two days with bitter humiliation. He had seen his brother Cuiclahua leading on his troops with the greatest gallantry, while he himself, thanks to his own conduct, was a helpless prisoner. He mourned over the terrible losses his people were suffering; and the fact that his kindness to the Spaniards had brought upon him nothing but ill-treatment and insult at their hands, had earned him the contempt of his people, and had involved his country in misfortune and ruin, cut him to the heart.

"What have I to do with Malinzin?" he said coldly, "I desire only to die." When still further urged, he added: "It is useless; they will neither believe me nor the false words and promises of Malinzin. You will never leave these walls alive."

On being assured that the Spaniards would willingly depart and leave the country, if their assailants would open a way to them, he at last consented to address the people. Clothing himself in his richest robes of state he ascended the central turret of the palace, surrounded by a guard of Spaniards, and accompanied by several Aztec nobles. When he was seen, the din of war ceased as if by magic. A dead silence fell upon the multitude, and they knelt and prostrated themselves before the sovereign they had so long held in the deepest reverence. But when he addressed them, assuring them that he was a guest, and not a prisoner, of the Spaniards, and ordered them to lay down their arms and to allow the Spaniards to march to the coast, indignation at his cowardice overpowered their feelings of reverence and respect. They burst into taunts and execrations, and a moment later a storm of missiles were hurled at the man who had betrayed them.

The Spanish guards, seeing the effect his presence had produced, had stood aside, to enable him the better to be seen; and before they could close around him and cover him with their shields, three missiles struck him, one, a stone hurled from a sling, smiting him on the head with such violence that he fell insensible.

When the Aztecs saw him fall, their brief outburst of indignation was succeeded by one of sorrow, and with a cry of grief the whole multitude dispersed, and in a minute or two the crowded square was wholly deserted.

Montezuma was carried to his chamber. When he recovered sensibility he refused absolutely to allow his wounds to be dressed, and tore off the bandages. Not a word passed his lips. He sat in an attitude of the deepest dejection. His own people despised him, and had raised their hands against him. He had drunk deeply of the cup of humiliation at the hands of the Spaniards; but this last drop filled it to overflowing; there was nothing for him but to die.

The Spanish leaders tried, but in vain, to persuade him to submit to surgical treatment; he paid no attention to their words, and they were soon called away by fresh danger from without. The Aztecs had speedily recovered from their emotion at seeing the fall of the emperor, and a body of five or six hundred of them, including many nobles and military leaders of high rank, had taken possession of the great temple, and now from its summit, a hundred and fifty feet high, opened a rain of missiles upon the palace. The Spaniards could not effectually return their fire, for the Aztecs were sheltered by the sanctuaries on the summit of the pyramids.

It was absolutely necessary for the safety of the defender to dislodge them from this position, and Cortez ordered his chamberlain, Don Escobar, with a hundred men to storm the *teocalli*, and set fire to the sanctuaries. But the little force were three times repulsed, and forced to fall back with considerable loss. Cortez then, though suffering much from the wound in his left hand, determined himself to lead the assault. As he was incapable of holding his shield, he had it

strapped to his left arm, and with three hundred picked men, and some thousands of the Tlascalans, sallied out from the palace, and attacked the Aztecs in the temple at the foot of the pyramid.

The Spaniards made their way through these without much difficulty, and then commenced the ascent of the pyramid. This offered great facilities for defence. There were five terraces, connected by steps so placed, that those mounting the pyramid had to make the whole circuit on each terrace before reaching the steps leading to the next. It was thus necessary to pass round the pyramid four times, or nearly two miles, exposed to the missiles of those upon the summit.

Leaving a strong body of Spaniards and Tlascalans at the bottom, to prevent the natives ascending and attacking him in the rear, Cortez led the way up the staircase, followed closely by his principal officers. In spite of the heavy stones and beams of wood which, with a storm of arrows, were hurled down upon them, the Spaniards won their way from terrace to terrace, supported by the fire of their musketeers below, until at last they reached the great platform on the summit of the pyramid. Here a terrible conflict commenced: the Aztecs, brought to bay, and fighting not only for life, but in the presence of their country's gods, displayed a valour at least equal to that of the Spaniards. Numbers were slightly in their favour, but this was far more than counter-balanced by the superior arms of the Spaniards, and by the armour, which rendered them almost invulnerable to the comparatively puny weapons of the Mexicans; and yet for three hours the fight continued. At the end of that time, all the Mexicans, save two or three priests, were killed, while forty-five of the Spaniards had fallen, and almost all the others were wounded.

While this fight had been raging, the combat had ceased elsewhere, the combatants on both sides being absorbed in the struggle taking place at the summit of the temple. They could not of course judge how it was going, though they caught sight of the combatants as they neared the edges of the platform, which was unprotected by wall or fence, and many in

the course of the struggle fell or were hurled over it. The moment the struggle was over the Spaniards rushed with exulting shouts into the sanctuary of the Mexican god, reeking with the blood of fresh killed victims; cast the image from its pedestal, rolled it across the platform to the head of the steps, and then amid shouts that were echoed by their comrades below, sent it bounding down, while a cry of anguish and dismay rose from the Mexicans.

The image dethroned, fire was applied to the sanctuary, and the smoke and flames rising up must have told countless thousands watching the capital from the housetops of the neighbouring cities that the white men had triumphed over the gods of Mexico; and that, as at Cholula so at the capital, these had proved impotent to protect their votaries from the dread invaders. So dismayed were the Mexicans at the misfortune, that they offered no resistance to the return of the Spaniards from the temple, and retired to their houses without further fighting.

At night the Spaniards sallied out again, relying upon the habit of the Mexicans to abstain from fighting at night, and burnt several hundred houses.

Believing that the spirit of the Mexicans would be broken now, Cortez, on the following morning, mounted the turret from which Montezuma had addressed them. Malinche was by his side; and when he held up his hands to show that he wished to address them, a silence fell upon the multitude, and Malinche's voice was heard plainly by them as she translated the words of Cortez. He told them they must now feel that they could not struggle against the Spaniards. Their gods had been cast down, their dwellings burnt, their warriors slaughtered. And all this they had brought on themselves by their rebellion. Yet if they would lay down their arms and return to the obedience of their sovereign he would stay his hand; if not he would make their city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it.

But Cortez learned at once that the spirit he had roused in the Mexicans was in no way lowered by their reverses. One

of the great chiefs answered him that it was true he had hurled down their gods and massacred their countrymen, but they were content to lose a thousand lives for every one that they took.

"Our streets," he said, "are still thronged with warriors; our numbers are scarcely diminished. Yours are lessening every day. You are dying with hunger and sickness. Your provisions and water are failing; you must soon fall into our hands. The bridges are broken down, and you cannot escape. There will be too few of you left to satisfy the vengeance of the gods."

When he had finished a shower of arrows showed that hostilities had recommenced. The garrison were now completely disheartened. Of what use the tremendous exertions they had made, and the lives that had been lost. They were still, as they had been on the first day of their arrival, hemmed in in their fortress, surrounded by foes thirsting for their blood; great numbers were wounded more or less severely; their provisions were well-nigh gone; the enemy were bolder than ever; they had been promised wealth and honour, they were starving, and death stared them in the face. They loudly exclaimed that they had been deceived and betrayed.

But the men who had served all along with Cortez stood firm. They had still every confidence in their leader. It was not his fault that they had been brought to this pass, but by the misconduct of others during his absence. At any rate, as they pointed out to their comrades, the only chance of escape was unity and obedience. Cortez himself was, as always in a moment of great danger, calm and collected. The thought of having to leave the city, to abandon all the treasures they had taken, was even more painful to him than to the soldiers. It was not the loss of his own share of the booty, but of that of the emperor; that he regretted, for he felt that this, together with the downfall of all his plans, and the loss of the kingdom he had already counted won, would bring upon him the displeasure of his emperor, would give strength to his enemies at court, and would probably ensure his being recalled in disgrace.

Nevertheless he saw that retreat was necessary, for the position could not be maintained. Every day the defences became weaker, the men more exhausted by fighting, and there would soon be no longer a morsel of bread to serve out to them. A retreat must therefore be made, the question was which route should be chosen. In any case, one of the narrow dykes connecting the island city with the shore must be traversed, and on these causeways the Spaniards would fight under great disadvantage. Finally, he settled upon that leading to Tlacopan, which was much the shortest, being only two miles in length.

For some days a large party of men had been at work constructing movable towers, similar to those used centuries before in sieges. They moved on rollers and were to be dragged by the Tlascalan allies. From their summits the soldiers could shoot down upon the housetops, from which they had been hitherto so annoyed. The towers were also provided with bridges which could be let down on to the roofs, and so enable the soldiers to meet their opponents hand to hand.

When the structures were completed the Spaniards again took the offensive, the gates were opened, and the three towers, dragged by the Tlascalans, moved out. The Mexicans, astonished at the sight of these machines, from whose summits a heavy fire of musketry were kept up, fell back for a time. The towers were moved up close to the terraces, and the soldiers, after partly clearing them by their fire, lowered the light bridges, and crossing, engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with the Mexicans, and drove them from their positions.

But from the lofty houses of the nobles the Mexicans still maintained their resistance. The towers were not high enough to overlook these, and as they came up beams of wood and huge stones were cast down upon them, striking with such force that it soon became evident to those within them that the towers would not hold together. They were dragged on, however, until a canal crossed the road. The bridge had been removed, and both the cavalry and the towers were brought to a standstill. The latter were abandoned, and Cortez

ordered his troops to make a road forward by filling up the canal with stones and wood from the houses near. While engaged in this operation they were exposed to an incessant fire from every point of advantage in the neighbourhood, and from the opposite bank of the canal. The work was, however, completed, and the cavalry crossing, drove the Mexicans headlong down the great street, until they came to another canal, where the same work had again to be performed.

No less than seven canals crossed the street, and it took two days of constant fighting before the last of these was crossed, and the whole street in their hands. Just as the last canal had been captured, Cortez, who was ever at the head of his men, received news that the Mexicans desired to open a parley with him, and that some of their nobles had arrived at the palace for that purpose. Delighted at the news he rode back with his officers. The Mexicans requested that the two priests who had been captured in the great temple, should be released, and should be the bearers of his terms and discuss the negotiations.

Cortez at once consented, and the priests left with the envoys, with instructions that if the Mexicans would lay down their arms the past should be forgiven.

The mission was, however, a mere trick. The Mexicans were most anxious to rescue the priests, one of whom was the high-priest, and therefore most sacred in their eyes. Cortez had scarcely sat down to a meal, which he sorely needed after his fatigues, when the news was brought that the Mexicans had again attacked with greater fury than ever, and at three points had driven off the detachments placed to guard the newly-made causeways across the canal. Cortez and his companions leaped on their horses, and riding down the great street again cleared it. But no sooner had he reached the other end, than the Mexicans gathering in the lanes and side streets, poured in again, and overpowered the guard at one of the principal canals.

Swarms of warriors poured in on all sides, and a storm of arrows and other missiles was poured down upon Cortez and

his cavaliers. The confusion at the broken bridge was tremendous. The cavalry and infantry struggled fiercely with the crowds of foes, while others strove again to repair the bridge which the Mexicans had again torn down. Cortez himself performed prodigies of valour in covering the retreat of his men, dashing alone into the midst of the ranks of the enemy, shouting his battle-cry, and dealing death with every blow of his sword. So far did he penetrate among his foes, that reports spread that he was killed; and when at last he fought his way back, and leapt his horse over a chasm still remaining in the bridge, his escape was regarded by his troops as absolutely miraculous, and it was said that he had been saved by the national Apostle St. James and the Virgin Mary, who had fought by his side. At night the Mexicans as usual drew off; and the Spaniards, dispirited and exhausted, fell back to their citadel.

That evening Montezuma died. He had refused all nourishment as well as medicine from the time he had been wounded. Father Olmedo did his best to persuade him to embrace the Christian faith, but Montezuma stoutly refused. Just before he died he sent for Cortez, and recommended his three daughters by his principal wife to his charge, begging him to interest his master the emperor on their behalf, and to see that they had some portion of their rightful inheritance.

"Your lord will do this," he said, "if only for the friendly offices I have rendered the Spaniards, and for the love that I have shown them, though it has brought me to this condition; but for this I bear them no ill-will."

This Cortez promised, and after the conquest, took the three ladies into his own family. They were instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, and were married to Spanish nobles and handsome dowries assigned to them.

The news of Montezuma's death was received with real grief by the Spaniards, to whom his generosity and constant kindness and gentleness of manner had endeared him. There can be but little doubt that, in spite of the accusations against him of meditating treachery, Montezuma was, from the time

they entered the capital, sincere in his good will towards the Spaniards. He was devoted to his own gods, and believed implicitly in the prophecy that Quetzalcoatl or his descendants would return to rule Mexico. Their superior science and attainments confirmed him in his belief that the Spaniards fulfilled the prophecy, and he was willing to resign alike his power, his possessions, and himself to their hands. In his early days he had shown great personal bravery, and the cowardice he displayed throughout the whole of his dealing with the Spaniards was the result of superstition, and not that of personal fear.

Cortez paid all respect to the remains of his late unhappy captive. The body was arrayed in royal robes, and laid on a bier, and was carried by the nobles—who had remained faithful to him during his imprisonment—into the city. It is uncertain where Montezuma was finally buried.

With the death of the emperor the last hope of the Spaniards of making terms with their assailants vanished; there was nothing now but retreat. After some debate it was settled that this should take place at night, when they would find the Mexicans unprepared. The difficulties of passage would be greater, but these would, it was thought, be counterbalanced by the advantage of being able to make at least a portion of their retreat unobserved.

It was determined that no time should be lost. The Mexicans would doubtless be mourning over the body of Montezuma, and would be unprepared for such prompt action on the part of the Spaniards. The first question was the disposal of the treasure; the soldiers had for the most part converted their share of the gold into chains, which they wore round their necks. But there was a vast amount in bars and ornaments, constituting the one-fifth which had been set aside for the crown, the one-fifth for Cortez himself, and the shares of his principal officers. One of the strongest horses was laden with the richest portion of the crown treasure, but all the rest was abandoned. The gold lay in great heaps.

“Take what you like of it!” Cortez said to his men, “but

be careful not to overload yourselves: 'He travels safest in the dark, who travels lightest.'

His own veterans took his advice, and contented themselves with picking out a few of the most valuable ornaments; but the soldiers of Narvaez could not bring themselves to leave such treasures behind them, and loaded themselves up with as much gold as they could carry. Cortez now arranged the order of march; the van was composed of two hundred Spanish foot, and twenty horsemen, under the orders of Gonzalo de Sandoval; the rearguard with the main body of the infantry and the greater portion of the guns was commanded by Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon. Cortez himself led the centre, which was in charge of the baggage, some of the heavy guns, and the prisoners, among whom were a son and two daughters of Montezuma, Cacama, and the other nobles who had been in prison with him.

The Tlascalans were divided among the three corps. A portable bridge had been prepared for crossing the canals which intersected the causeway; the intention being that it should be laid across a canal, that the army should pass over it, and that it should then be carried forward to the next gap in the causeway. This was a most faulty arrangement, necessitating frequent and long delays, and entailing almost certain disaster. Had three such portable bridges been constructed, the column could have crossed the causeway with comparatively little risk, and there was no reason why these bridges should not have been constructed, as they could have been carried without difficulty by the Tlascalans.

At midnight the troops were in readiness for the march. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, and at one o'clock on July 1st, 1520, the Spaniards sallied out from the fortress that they had so stoutly defended. Silence reigned in the city. As noiselessly as possible, the troops made their way down the broad street, expecting every moment to be attacked; but even the tramping of the horses, and the rumbling of the baggage waggons and artillery did not awake the sleeping Mexicans, and the head of the column arrived at the head

of the causeway before they were discovered. Then, as the advanced guard were preparing to lay the portable bridge across the first opening, some Aztec sentinels gave the alarm.

The priests on the summits of the temples heard their cries, and at once sounded their horns and the huge war-drum. Instantly the city awoke, and the silence was succeeded by a roar of sound; the vanguard had scarcely got upon the causeway when canoes shot out upon the lake, and soon a storm of stones and arrows burst upon the column. More and more terrible did it become, as fresh canoes crowded with the warriors came up. Many of these pushed up to the causeway itself, and the natives landing fell upon the Spaniards with fury. The latter made no stay; fighting their way through their foes they pressed on until they reached the next opening in the causeway, and there waited for the bridge to come up.

But a column many thousands strong, with baggage and artillery, takes a long time to cross a bridge, and the advanced guard had reached the opening long before the rear had passed the bridge, and there stood helpless, exposed to the terrible storm of missiles, until at last the column were all across the bridge. Then forty picked men, who had been specially told off for the task, tried to raise it so that it might be carried to the front, but the weight of the baggage waggons and artillery had so wedged it into the earth, that they were unable to move it.

They persevered in their efforts until most of them had fallen; the rest bore the terrible news to the army that the bridge was immovable. A terrible cry of despair arose as the news spread. All hope seemed lost; and, regardless of order or discipline, all pressed forward to endeavour in some way or other to cross the obstacle that barred their way. Pressed on by those behind them, Sandoval and his cavaliers dashed into the water. The distance was short, but the horses were weak from hunger, and burdened by their own heavy armour and that of their riders. Some succeeded in swimming across, others sank, while some reached the opposite side only to fall back again, as they tried to climb the steep bank.

The infantry followed them, throwing away their armour to enable them to swim; some succeeded, others were pressed down by their comrades; many were killed by the war-clubs or spears of the Mexicans in their canoes; others again, half stunned by the clubs, were dragged into the canoes and carried off to the city to be sacrificed.

All along the causeway the fight raged unceasingly, the Aztecs in the boats alongside leaping ashore and grappling with their foes, and rolling with them down the causeway into the water, while those in the distance kept up their rain of missiles. The opening in the causeway was at last filled: choked up with ammunition waggons and guns, bales of rich goods, chests of gold, and the bodies of men and horses, and over these the Spaniards made their way.

Cortez had swum or waded across on his horse, and he rode on until he joined Sandoval and the remains of the advanced guard, who were checked at the third and last opening. The cavaliers set the example to their followers by plunging into the water; the rest followed as best they could. Many were drowned by the weight of the gold they carried, others got across by clinging to the tails and manes of the horses. Cortez, with Sandoval and other cavaliers, led the retreat until they reached the end of the causeway. The din of battle was now far behind, but those who came up brought the news that the rearguard were so sorely pressed, that they would be destroyed unless aid reached them.

Cortez and his companions did not hesitate. They dashed along the causeway, again swam the canal, and made their way through the crowd until they reached the rearguard. Morning was breaking now, and it showed the lake covered with canoes filled with warriors. Along the whole length of the causeway a desperate fight was raging. Cortez found Alvarado on foot, his horse had been killed under him. With a handful of followers he was still desperately defending the rear against the Mexicans, who had poured out from the city in pursuit. The artillery had at first done good service, sweeping the causeway and mowing down hundreds of their assailants, but

the Aztecs were careless of life, and rushed on so furiously that they swept over the guns, killing those who served them, and fell upon the infantry.

The charge of Cortez and his companions for a moment bore back the foe, but pressed by those behind they swept aside resistance, and bore back the Spaniards to the edge of the canal. Cortez and his companions plunged in and swam across. Alvarado stood on the brink hesitating; unhorsed and defenceless he could not make his way across the gap, which was now crowded with the canoes of the enemy. He set his strong lance on the bottom of the canal, and using it as a leaping pole sprang across. The feat was an extraordinary one, for although the width is not given, it was declared by those who witnessed it, to be impossible for any mortal. It filled friends and foes alike with astonishment, and the spot is to this day known by the Mexicans as "Alvarado's Leap."

The Aztecs followed no farther. They were occupied now in securing the enormous wealth the Spaniards had left behind them; and the remnants of the army marched along the causeway unmolested, and took possession of the village at its end. Cortez, iron-hearted as he was, sat down and burst into tears as he viewed the broken remnant of his army. He was consoled, however, by finding that many of his most trusted companions had escaped, Sandoval, Alvarado, Olid, Ordaz, and Avila were safe; and, so to his great joy, was Marina. She had, with a daughter of a Tlascalan chief, been placed under the escort of a party of Tlascalan warriors, in the van of the column, and had passed unharmed through the dangers of the night.

The loss of the Spaniards in their retreat is variously estimated, but the balance of authority among contemporary writers places it at four hundred and fifty Spaniards and four thousand Tlascalans. This, with the loss sustained in the previous conflicts, reduced the Spaniards to about a third and the Tlascalans to a fifth of the force which had entered the capital. The greater part of the soldiers of Narvaez had been killed; they had formed the rearguard,

and had not only borne the brunt of the battle, but had suffered from the effect of their cupidity. Of the cavalry but twenty-three remained mounted, all the artillery had been lost, and every musket thrown away in the flight.

Velasquez de Leon had fallen in the early part of the retreat, bravely defending the rear; and several others among the leaders had also fallen, together with all the prisoners whom they had brought out from the capital.

The remains of the army straggled on into the town of Tlacopan, but Cortez would allow of no halt there. At any moment the exultant Aztecs from the capital might arrive, and in a battle in the streets the Spaniards would stand no chance whatever with their foes; he therefore hurried the soldiers through, and when outside endeavoured to form them into some sort of order.

It was necessary to give them a few hours of repose, and he led them towards an eminence crowned by a temple which commanded the plain. It was held by a party of natives, and the troops, dispirited and exhausted, refused at first to advance against them, but the influence of Cortez backed by the example of his officers had its usual effect. The column moved forward against the temple, and the natives after a few discharges of missiles abandoned the place. It was a large building, affording ample shelter for the Spaniards and their allies; provisions were found there and a large supply of fuel intended for the service of the temple. Here, lighting great fires, they dried their clothing, bound up their wounds, and after partaking of food threw themselves down to sleep.

Fortunate it was for the Spaniards that the Mexicans, contented with the slaughter they had inflicted, the plunder they had captured, and most of all with the prisoners whom they had carried off to be sacrificed on their altars, retired to the capital and allowed the invaders twenty-four hours' breathing time. Had they pressed them hotly and relentlessly, from the moment when they emerged from the causeway, they would have annihilated them; for at that time the Spaniards were too worn-out and dispirited to be capable of any effectual

resistance. Food and rest, however, did wonders for them; they were hardy veterans, and with Cortez and the leaders they most trusted with them, they soon came to look at matters in a more cheerful light. They were still stronger than they were when they first marched upon Mexico, why, then, should they despair of making their way back to Tlascala where they would have rest and friends? They knew there was a long and painful march before them, and probably desperate battles to fight; but in a fair field they felt themselves a match for any number of the enemy, and when, late in the evening, their officers bade them form up and prepare for a night's march they fell in steadily and willingly, and Cortez felt that they could again be relied upon under every emergency.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PASSAGE OF THE CAUSEWAY.

ON marching out from the city Roger and his two comrades formed part of a picked band, to whom was entrusted the charge of the prisoners. Roger had been specially selected, as he could translate to them any order given by the officer of the party; and he was ordered to march next to them.

He had once or twice in the past few days been enabled, by the intervention of Marina, to visit the prisoners. Cacama's spirit was in no way shaken by captivity.

"Your general has made a fatal mistake," he said, "in sending Cuitlahua out to pacify the populace. He is of very different stuff from Montezuma, who has become a woman in the hands of the Spanish. You will see that he will never return, but will lead the people on to the attack. It matters little to us, I know that we shall never escape; the Spaniards will slay us all rather than that we should rejoin our people. But for that I care not: one would rather die in battle than

be slain as a captive, but in either case we shall be dying for our country, and what can we wish for more? It is the duty of all to risk their lives whenever they be needed for their country. Some here have fought in fifty battles for Mexico. I am younger, but not too young to have shared in many a battle. I fear death in no way, my friend, and should welcome it as a change from captivity. I am well content now. I should have grieved to have died believing that the Mexicans had lost all their ancient spirit and courage, and were content to be slaves beneath the yoke of a handful of strangers; but now I see that they were asleep and not dead, and that these boasting strangers will find that the despised Mexican is a match for them, I shall die happy."

The news of the wounding of Montezuma and the desperate fighting in the streets and round the palace, excited the prisoners to the utmost. In their place of confinement they heard the thunder of the guns, the perpetual rattle of the musketry, and the shouts and yells of the combatants; but it was only when Roger visited them that they obtained any details as to the combat that was going on. They were filled with enthusiasm as they heard how desperately their countrymen were fighting; and their only regret was that they could not join in the struggle and die leading the assault against the Spaniards. Roger did not see them upon the last day until he took his place by their side, when the column formed up in the courtyard.

"I am to keep near you, Cacama," he said, "in order to translate anything the officer may have to say to you."

"We are going to leave the city?" Cacama asked, eagerly.

"Yes, we are going to cross the causeway." The officer in charge here came up and gave an order which Roger interpreted: "He asks whether you will all give a pledge to remain silent as we march out. If you will do so he will accept your promise; but if not he will be forced to gag you, as the safety of the army depends upon our getting beyond the streets before our march is discovered."

"I wonder that they are ready to take our promise,"

Cacama said disdainfully, "after their own treachery. However, an Aztec noble is not like a Spaniard, our faith may be depended upon; we will give our word to be silent." The other prisoners also promised, and were allowed to take their places in the column ungagged.

The alarm was given long before the rear of the column had got out from the street. Cacama gave an exclamation of joy when he heard the silence broken by loud cries at the end of the street, and immediately afterwards by the shouts of the priests on the lofty temples, by the blowing of horns, and the beating of the great war-drum.

"The game has begun," he said. "We shall see how many Spaniards remain alive when the sun rises. Long before they can get across the causeway, our people will be upon them. We shall not see the triumph, for without defensive armour we shall fall in the darkness beneath the missiles of our own people. That matters not: better to die at the hands of a Mexican struggling to be free than at those of these treacherous invaders."

The missiles showered down thickly upon the column from the houses till they emerged from the street and made their way out on to the causeway; then they became exposed to the storm of arrows, darts, and stones, from the canoes on the lake. By their officer's orders the soldiers immediately in charge of the prisoners drew their swords and formed a circle round them, with orders to fall upon and kill them at once did they make the slightest movement to escape. Roger translated to the captives the officer's assurance that, although he was most anxious for their safety, he had no resource but to order the soldiers to slay them at once if they made any movement to escape.

"We shall not try to escape," Cacama said. "How can we do so with our hands bound?"

During the long pause that ensued before the rear of the column passed over the bridge on to the causeway the impatience among the soldiers was great. Many had already fallen beneath the missiles of the enemy. Scarce one but had

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received wounds more or less severe. Several of the prisoners, too, had fallen.

"What is it?" Cacama asked, as the cry of despair went up when it became known that the bridge was immovable, and that there were no means of crossing the breaks in the causeway ahead. He muttered an exclamation of triumph when Roger repeated to him the news he had just learnt.

"That settles it," he said; "their fate is now sealed. The gods are at last fighting again for Mexico. Roger, I am sorry for you, I am sorry for my wife, and for Amenche; but I rejoice for my country. If you should escape this night, Roger, and you have more chance than most, since you speak our language, do all you can for them."

"You may be sure that I shall do that, Cacama; but the chance of any escaping seems to me a small one. Still, it may be that some will get over alive. The Spaniards have their faults, Cacama, but they are grand soldiers; and at any rate, now that they see they must win their way or perish, they will perform wonders."

"Ah!" the exclamation was caused by an arrow striking the young prince in the chest. At this time a terrible fight was raging all around them. The natives had gained a footing on the causeway, and the Spaniards were fighting hand to hand with them.

"I am mortally wounded, Roger," Cacama said. "Most of the others have already fallen. It is better so; I have lived long enough to see vengeance taken on our oppressors. Roger, there is one chance for you, wrap round you one of our mantles; in the darkness none will see that you are not a Mexican, and they will not shoot at you. Listen, there is Cuitcatl's war cry. I know his voice, and doubtless they have discerned our white dresses in the darkness, and he is trying to rescue us."

The crowd pressing along the causeway had swept the guards away from the prisoners—indeed there were now scarcely any prisoners left to guard. Unprotected by any defensive armour, most of them had fallen very early in the

conflict. Roger was supporting Cacama, and another prisoner lay dead at their feet. Roger stooped and snatched off his mantle, then, lifting Cacama in his arms, forced his way through the press to the edge of the causeway just as a canoe ran up alongside, and a number of Aztecs sprang ashore.

"Cuitcatl!" Roger shouted at the top of his voice.

"Here," the young noble exclaimed as he sprang forward.

"Here is Cacama," Roger cried. At the same moment he received a stunning blow on the back of his helmet from one of the Spaniards, who took him for a Mexican, and fell down the side of the causeway into the water with his burden in his arms."

When Roger recovered his senses, he was lying in a canoe which was being paddled rapidly. He had been insensible but a few minutes, for the cries of the combatants still sounded close at hand. Cuitcatl was bending over him.

"How is Cacama?" he asked, as soon as he could speak.

"Alas! he is dead," Cuitcatl replied, "you did your best to save him, Roger; he spoke but once after we had got him into the canoe. He said: 'Protect my wife, Cuitcatl, and save our friend.'"

"Where are you taking us?" Roger asked next.

"We will land some distance up the lake. There I will obtain bearers and carry Cacama home that he may be buried as one of his rank should be. As to you, we must think what had best be done. None of those with me know who you are, believing, in the darkness, that you are one of ourselves. They are my own men, and I can rely upon them when their blood is cooled, but it were best that at present they remained in ignorance. Bathalda is in the bow, and his influence and mine will be sufficient to control them when we are once out of hearing of the conflict. Nothing save my duty to Cacama would have withdrawn me from it, but they must do without me. Not a Spaniard will see to-morrow's sun. Are you badly hurt, Roger? It is too dark to see anything."

"Not badly, I have several arrow-points sticking in me in one place or another, but they have not gone deep, my

armour kept them out. It was a blow on the head that felled me. There were many Mexicans on the causeway fighting with the Spaniards, and I was of course mistaken for one of them. My helmet broke the blow, and I was stunned rather than injured, I think. How came you to be just at that spot?"

"I was on the look-out for the prisoners, being determined to rescue Cacama if possible; and as I was fighting farther back, I heard it said that there were several white dresses among the Spaniards ahead, so I made to that point, and just as I was springing ashore heard your shout, and saw you roll down, you and another. I guessed it might be Cacama, for I knew that you would do your best to save him, and so sprang back again to the water's edge and found that it was so; and found, alas! that Cacama was mortally wounded. How about the other prisoners?"

"I think that all had fallen before he did. You see they had no protection, and even we who had armour were suffering terribly from the missiles poured in among us. I know that two ladies, Montezuma's daughters, were among the first to fall. More than that I cannot say, for I kept close to Cacama, hoping that in some way I might find an opportunity to aid his escape; and had he not been struck just when he was I might have done so, for after the news came that the bridge could not be removed all was confusion, and each man thought only of saving his own life."

After rowing for three hours, the canoe, having made a circuit of the city and crossed the lake, reached the shore at a distance of a few miles from Tezcuco. Cacama's body was lifted ashore, then Cuitcatl said to Bathalda:—

"Bathalda, you will be glad to know that we have saved Cacama's friend and mine, Roger Hawkshaw."

The forester gave an exclamation of pleasure: "I am glad, indeed," he exclaimed; "I wondered what had become of him in the fight."

Bathalda's exclamation silenced the murmur with which the others had heard that one of the white men had been saved by

them from the general destruction which as they believed had fallen upon their oppressors.

"He is a friend of our people," Cuitcatl went on, "and is of another race to these Spaniards. As you see, men, he speaks our language well, and is like one of ourselves. Cacama held him as a dear friend; and, as you know, Cacama hated the Spaniards, and had it not been for treason would have attacked them long ago. Now form a litter with the paddles and lay Cacama upon it; morning is breaking and we have far to go. The new Lord of Tezcuco is a friend of the Spaniards, we must get well away as soon as we can."

Roger threw aside the Spanish helmet, Cuitcatl took some of the plumes from his own head-dress and bound them round his head, and as soon as the bier was constructed the little party started.

In the afternoon they arrived at Cuitcatl's house, the chief having himself gone forward to inform the queen of Cacama's fate, and of the near approach of the party with his body. It was a mournful scene when they arrived; the whole of the male and female retainers were assembled outside the house, the women filling the air with cries and lamentations, the men weeping and wailing. The bearers of the bier passed into the house, where Maclutha awaited it. Roger, unwilling to intrude upon the grief of the unhappy queen, remained without talking to Bathalda, the natives viewing him with hostility and wonder, being unable to understand how it was that their lord had brought one of the white men to his house. In a minute or two, however, Amenche's attendant ran down the steps to Roger, and, telling him to follow her, led the way to the apartment where the princess was waiting him. She fell crying into his arms.

"It is terrible, Roger," she sobbed; "as long as my brother was but a captive we had hoped that he might be restored to us, and now he is brought home dead—slain, too, by a Mexican arrow."

"Cacama was ready for death, Amenche; I was beside him from the time he left his prison. He was sure that we

should be attacked, and saw that as he and those with him were unprotected by any armour they would be the first to fall when the fighting began, as in the darkness the Mexicans would not be able to distinguish them from their enemies; but he said that he was quite content to die, seeing that the people had now recovered their ancient spirit and were battling with heroes against their oppressors."

"And they are all destroyed," Amenche exclaimed, passionately.

"We do not know that," Roger replied. "Their position was a terrible one and seemed well-nigh hopeless. I know that Cuitcatl regarded it as quite hopeless, and deems that all have fallen, but I do not think so. The passages to be crossed were of no great width, and though numbers may have fallen, I believe that some will have made their way across. They will have lost their guns, and if the Aztecs continue to press them as hotly as they did upon the causeway they may slay them all; but if they give them time to rally they may yet fight their way back to Tlascala."

"And you will stop here with us, Roger: is it not so?"

"If your people will allow me to do so I will, Amenche. I ask for nothing better; but remember that even Cacama himself felt doubtful whether he could protect me from the power of the priests—and at that time their reason for hating the Spaniards was small to what it now is, and Cacama himself has gone. Cuitcatl, though a powerful cacique, has but small influence in comparison with that which Cacama as King of Tezcuco and nephew of Montezuma possessed."

"How is Montezuma? What has become of him? We heard that he was wounded; but it scarce seems possible that his own subjects should raise a hand against him."

"He died yesterday afternoon, and Cortez delivered his body to the people of the city."

The girl uttered an exclamation of horror. "This is dreadful, indeed," she said, bursting again into tears. "To think of the great emperor being dead! What horrors and misfortunes have befallen us! It is bad for us, too, Roger; I was one

of his favourite nieces, and I thought of going to him and obtaining his permission to marry you, in order that you should be received into the nation; now that hope is gone. But I must leave you for a while and go to Maclutha. I must not leave her longer alone in her grief."

Soon afterwards Cuitcatl entered the room. "Come, Roger," he said; "a meal has been prepared, and we both sorely need food and rest. To-morrow we shall have time to talk over the future, and by that time I shall have news whether any of the Spaniards have escaped. If they have, I must hurry off again; for Cuitlahua has sworn that not one shall leave the country alive, and every man who can bear arms must take the field against them. But it will be an easy task, for, at any rate, few can have got off that causeway alive."

Roger was glad, as soon as he had finished his meal, to throw himself down on a couch. He had been on guard the greater part of the night before the sortie to clear the street leading to the causeway, and had slept but an hour or two the following evening. He had lost a good deal of blood from the blow he had received on the head, and from the arrow wounds, of which he had several, although none were serious, and he was now completely done up.

Amenche stole away from Maclutha for a few minutes' talk with him and Cuitcatl, while they had their meal; and after hearing an outline of the later events of the siege of the palace and of the fight on the causeway she had herself insisted that Roger should instantly seek repose. "I shall be occupied with Maclutha, and there is much to see about in such times as these. There can be no pomp and ceremonial of burial; that must come when peace is restored, and we carry Cacama's ashes to be laid with his father's at Tezcuco. Bathalda and some of the slaves have already started to bring in wood for the funeral pile. All will be ready by sunrise to-morrow."

Roger's wounds were dressed by one of the slaves, who was skilled in all operations connected with wounds, and he slept, without once waking, until Cuitcatl came to him in the morning, and bade him arise, as all was ready for the ceremony

of Cacama's cremation. The rule in Mexico was, that on the death of anyone, the body was attired in the garments peculiar to his tutelary deity; but Cacama was dressed simply in the robe indicating his rank.

"You see," Amenche said, when Roger joined them; "we have dressed him in a warrior's robes, not in those of a Lord of Tezcuco, for we have none such here; nor have we attired him in the garments of our god, for Cacama, as you know, worshipped chiefly the great Unknown God, in whom his grandfather believed, who is Lord of all the gods, and of all peoples, and who must be the same, Roger, that you white people worship."

"No doubt He is the same," Roger said; "and I am glad, Amenche, that you and your brother have already come to love Him. He is not Lord of all gods, for He is the only God. There are none others; some day, dear, when you come to England with me, a priest shall instruct you in all we know of Him. But I see they are going to light the pile. What are all those pieces of paper that cover his body?"

"They are charms, Roger, against the dangers of the unknown road he has to travel. It is the custom of the country; and we did not think it worth while to depart from it. It is also the custom to sacrifice numbers of slaves, and send them to be his attendants upon the road. But the Unknown God hates all sacrifices of blood, and Cacama, although forced to yield to the power of the priests, would have had none, could he have helped it, in Tezcuco."

Cuiteatl, as the oldest friend of the dead prince, applied a torch to the pile, which was composed for the most part of aromatic wood. Maclutha and Amenche broke into a plaintive hymn, in which their attendants and the females who had collected in considerable numbers from the neighbouring villages joined. Higher and higher rose the flames, the voices rising with them, until the dirge culminated in a loud wailing cry, as the flames reached the corpse and hid it from view. Then the hymn re-commenced, and continued until the pile had been burnt down. The mourners then re-entered the

house, leaving the two or three priests who were present to collect the ashes and to place them in a large gold vase, of which they would act as guardians, until the time came for its removal in solemn procession to Tezcuco.

Cuitcatl took Roger aside, "I have bad news from Mexico," he said. "You were right, and I was mistaken; a portion of the Spaniards and Tlascalans succeeded in crossing the breaches in the causeway and gaining the mainland. However, it is said that two-thirds of their number perished. As they have lost the terrible weapons that committed such destruction they will be at our mercy. We know now that they are not invincible, their terror has departed. Be assured that they will not escape us; they have reached land on the opposite side of the lake, and will have to make a great circuit, which will give us time to collect our forces. Cuiclahua has already despatched a messenger to every town and village, ordering all to assemble under their chiefs, and to be prepared to march at a moment's notice when the rendezvous is settled upon. I would it had all been finished on the causeway, but there can be no doubt as to the result.

"At most there are but four hundred Whites and four thousand Tlascalans, while we shall number over one hundred thousand. They say the white men have lost not only their great guns, but those they carry on their shoulders, and that only twenty or thirty of their strange animals have survived. Therefore this time, we shall fight with something like equal arms, and shall overwhelm them as the sea overwhelms the rock."

"Your simile is an unfortunate one, Cuitcatl. The sea covers the rock, but when it retires the rock remains. Still, it does seem to me that, however valiantly the Spaniards may fight, they cannot withstand such terrible odds.

"But I cannot rejoice with you. You know that I abhor as much as you do the cruel massacre at the temple. My sympathies were with your people while struggling to throw off the yoke that the Spaniards had imposed upon them; but I am white like them. I know that many among them are

noble men, and that much of the harm they have committed has been done from conscientious motives, just as your people have, from a desire to please the gods, offered up thousands of human victims every year. Much as they love God, many of them—and certainly Cortez among them—think more of spreading their religion than they do of personal ambition or even of gain. I have many acquaintances, and some good friends among them; and I cannot think of their being all destroyed without regret and horror. I do not say that you are not justified in killing all, for your existence as a nation is at stake, but to me it is terrible."

"I can understand that, my friend; but nothing can avert their destruction. Now as to yourself, had it not been for Cacama's death I should have said it were best that you should marry Ameneche at once: but among us it would be most unseemly for a sister to think of marrying when her brother has but just died."

"It is the same with us," Roger said. "A certain time must always pass after the death of a near relative before marriage. Besides, the present is no time for thinking of such a thing. My fate is altogether uncertain, and I own that I consider there is small ground for hope that I can escape from the present troubles. If, as seems certain now, the Spaniards are all destroyed, the people will more than ever venerate their gods, and the power of the priests will be almost unlimited. It is useless for me to try to deceive myself, Cuitcatl. I know your friendship; but you would not have the power to withstand the decision of the priests. They will never permit a single white man to remain alive in the land. Had Cacama lived he might possibly have protected me; but I think that even his authority would have been insufficient to do so. If the Spaniards are destroyed, I have but one chance of my life: and that is, to make my way down to the coast, and to sail away with the Spaniards there."

Cuitcatl was silent, for he felt the force of what Roger said.

"If you go you must not go alone," he replied at last. "Ameneche would die were you to desert her."

"I will assuredly take her if she will accompany me," Roger said; "but I do not think that there is much chance of my escape, even in that way. The news of the destruction of the Spaniards will be carried with the speed of the wind down to the coast, and the tribes there will instantly rise and fall upon the Spaniards; those who have been the most friendly with them will be the very first to take up arms against them, in order to make their peace with the Aztecs, and to avert their vengeance for the aid they have given the Spaniards. Long before we could reach the coast the Spaniards there would either be killed or driven on board their ships."

Quitcaatl could not deny the justice of Roger's reasoning. "There is nothing to do," the latter went on, "but to wait—at any rate until this battle has taken place. Impossible as it seems, the Spaniards may yet extricate themselves from the toils, in which case I should join them; if not, and I find my escape by the coast cut off by the rising of the tribes there, the only thing that I can see is to take to the mountains, and to live there as I did with Bathalda, on the proceeds of the chase. I might then, perhaps, in time make my way to people in the far north, who have not such reason as they have here for hating a man with a white skin, or I might wait until the Spaniards send another expedition to carry out what Cortez has failed to accomplish."

Leaving their fires burning the remains of the Spanish army marched at midnight from the temple where they had enjoyed rest, and had recruited their strength and spirits. The sick and wounded were placed in the centre, and carried on litters or on the backs of the porters, while others, who were strong enough to sit upright, rode on the horses behind the mounted soldiers. All night the march continued without disturbance; but in the morning large parties of natives were seen moving about. Tlacopan lay on the most westerly point of the lake, and the most direct route of the Spaniards would have been to keep along by its margin; but had they done so, they would have been liable to attack from the capital, as the troops could have poured out across the causeway to Tepejacac, and headed

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them there. They therefore struck off due north, with the intention of passing to the west of Lake Xaltocan.

The country was a broken one, and the Mexicans, gathering on the hills, rolled stones down upon them with volleys of arrows and darts. Sometimes they even ventured to descend into the plain and fall upon the rear of the column. As often as they did so, however, the little body of cavalry drove them off. The infantry column kept steadily on its way, though greatly harassed by the continued attacks. Day after day passed in this manner, the Spaniards being reduced to great straits from want of food, as the natives, in the small towns and villages through which they passed, carried off all provisions and stores, and the only food the soldiers could obtain were wild cherries and a few ears of corn that had been left by the harvesters.

Sometimes a horse fell dead from exhaustion, and afforded a welcome supply of food. Many of the soldiers dropped lifeless from fatigue and famine; others, unable to keep up the march, fell behind and were captured by the enemy, and carried off to furnish sacrifices for the gods. To lighten themselves the soldiers threw away the gold to obtain which they had dared so many dangers and suffered so many hardships. Life itself was at stake, and the precious metal had ceased to have any value in their eyes. Through those terrible days, Cortez as usual set a splendid example to his soldiers. He was in the front wherever danger threatened; he bore his full share of the hardships, and by his cheerfulness and calmness kept up the spirits of the soldiers and cheered them by assuring them they might yet escape from the dangers that menaced them.

The Tlascalans also behaved admirably, and appeared to bear no grudge whatever against the Spaniards for the sufferings which their alliance had brought upon them. Passing through the town of Quauhtilan, and round the north of Lake Tzompanco, they at last turned their faces east, and on the seventh day reached the edge of the plateau and looked down upon the plains of Otompan. They were still but thirty miles

in a direct line from the capital; but they had traversed fully three times that distance in their circuitous journey.

During the last day's march the numbers of the natives who surrounded them had considerably increased, and menacing shouts of the fate that awaited them greeted them as they marched along. The nature of the peril was not understood until, on reaching the crest from which they looked down on the valley of Otompan, they saw that it was filled with a mighty army, whose white cotton mail gave it—as one of their historians states—the appearance of being covered with snow. Here were all the levies that Cuiclahua had collected; the whole of the cities of the plains had sent in their quota, and the bright banners of the chiefs and nobles waved gaily over the snowy array of their followers.

The numbers of the Mexicans were put down at varying amounts by the Spanish historians, some of them laying them as high as two hundred thousand; but it is probable that at least half that number were assembled to bar the march of the worn-out little force that surveyor them from the heights. Even the most hopeful and courageous of the Spaniards felt something like dismay as they viewed the tremendous array before them. Deprived of the weapons on which they had chiefly depended for victory, with their cavalry reduced to a mere handful, the prospect seemed indeed desperate. But there was no room for hesitation, they must cut a way through the enemy or die.

Cortez addressed the troops in a short speech of encouragement. He reminded them that they had already won victories against enormous odds, and that numbers, indeed, were but of slight consequence, when the arm of God was with them. "Assuredly He who had carried them safely through so many perils, would not now abandon them and His own good cause, to perish by the hand of these infidels."

With steady step and in compact array, the little force descended the hill into the plain, and as soon as they reached the level ground, the Aztec host attacked them on all sides. The handful of calvary, consisting almost entirely of the

personal friends and officers of Cortez, cleared the way for the head of the column by repeated and desperate charges; while the infantry with pike and sword maintained a front that the Aztecs, although fighting with the greatest bravery, were unable to break. The Tascalans fought as stoutly as the Spaniards, their native land lay almost within sight, and the love of home and the remembrance of many a victory gained over the Aztecs, animated them to rival the steadfastness of their white comrades.

Yet though unbroken the little force was but as an island in the midst of an ocean; the attacks, although always repulsed, were constantly renewed; the gaps in the ranks of the enemy were filled up with fresh combatants, and as hour after hour went on, even the most hopeful in the Spanish band began to feel that the contest could have but one termination, and that they would be overcome not so much by the arms of the Aztecs, as by fatigue, thirst and hunger.

The cavalry had performed prodigies of valour; breaking up into knots of threes and fours, they had charged into the dense crowd of the enemy, clearing a way for themselves with lance and sword, and by the weight of the horses and armour.

But such charges could have but little effect on the fortunes of the day; the numbers of those they slew counted for nothing in such a host, and the lanes they made closed behind them, until after making a circuit they again joined the main body. For hours the fight raged. The Spanish battle-cry, "St. James and Our Lady!" still rose sternly in answer to the triumphant yells of the Aztecs; their front was still unbroken, but all felt that nothing short of a miracle could save them. Not one but was wounded in many places by the Aztec missiles. Their arms were weary with striking, the sun blazed down upon them with scorching heat. Their throats were parched with thirst; they were enfeebled by hunger. The Aztecs, seeing that their foes were becoming faint and wearied, that the horses of the cavaliers could scarce carry them, and that the end was approaching, redoubled their shouts and pressed more heartily and eagerly than ever upon the Spaniards, driving

the cavalry back by sheer weight into the ranks of the infantry.

Cortez at this supreme moment still maintained his calmness, he saw that all was lost unless a change was made, and that speedily. Another hour at latest, and the resistance would be over, and the brave men who had followed him be either dead or prisoners reserved for sacrifice. Throughout the day he had ordered his cavaliers to strike ever at the chiefs, knowing well that undisciplined bodies of men become lost without leaders. Raising himself in his stirrups, he looked round over the seething mass of the foe, and at some distance beheld a small body of officers whose gay and glittering attire showed them to belong to the highest rank of nobles, gathered round a litter on which was a chief, gorgeously attired with a lofty plume of feathers floating above his head, rising above which was a short staff bearing a golden net.

Cortez knew that this was the symbol carried by the Aztec commanders-in-chief. He called to his comrades—Sandoval, Olid, Alvarado, Avila, and the other cavaliers—and pointing to the chief cried: "There is our mark! Follow and support me." Then he spurred his wearied horse forward, and dashed into the throng followed by his cavaliers. The fury and suddenness of the attack bore all before it; the compact little body of horsemen, shouting their battle-cry, clove through the ranks of the enemy, making straight for the Indian commander, whose name was Cihuaca. In vain the Mexicans tried to bar the way; in vain when, after a few minutes of tremendous exertion, Cortez reached his goal, the nobles and the body-guard strove to defend their chief. Cortez, fighting with almost superhuman vigour, clove his way through all opposition, and with his lance ran through the Aztec general and hurled him to the ground, when one of his followers, leaping from his horse, quickly dispatched him.

The guard, appalled by the suddenness of the attack, broke and fled in all directions, scattering panic among the lately triumphant host. Scarcely knowing what had happened, but feeling that some dreadful misfortune had occurred and all was

At first, the Aztecs were seized with a blind terror, and breaking their ranks thought only of escape.

As if by magic a victorious army was transformed into a flying mob. The Spaniards and Tlascalans took instant advantage of the change. Fatigue and thirst, wounds and exhaustion, were forgotten. With shouts of triumph and vengeance they broke their ranks, and followed hotly upon the fugitives. These, impeded by their very numbers and half mad with panic, offered no resistance whatever. Great numbers were overtaken and slain, and when the Spaniards abandoned the pursuit at the summons of their leader's trumpet, and assembled round him, the field was covered with the bodies of their fallen foes.

An hour was spent in gathering the booty from the bodies of the chiefs, of whom great numbers had fallen; and then, after offering up thanks to God for their marvellous deliverance, the army again renewed their march. It was already late in the afternoon, and they halted at sunset at a temple, standing on an eminence which afforded them shelter and a defensive position, should the Aztecs renew the assault. But of this there was little fear, their defeat had been utter and complete, there was no chance of their rallying.

The victory of Otompan was one of the most remarkable ever won. The discrepancy of numbers was immense; the Spaniards were unprovided with artillery or fire-arms, and owed their success to their discipline and bravery, and still more to the extraordinary valour and quick-sightedness of their leader.

CHAPTER XX.

AT TLASCALA.

ROGER was sitting in the evening, conversing with Maclutha and Amenche on the probabilities of the battle that was expected to take place on that day, when Cuicatl

suddenly entered. His robe of bright featherwork was gone; the *panache* of floating plumes was shorn from his head; his white garment was stained with blood; he was overcome by exhaustion and grief. No words were needed to explain what had taken place. Impossible as it had seemed, the Aztec army had been defeated. A cry broke from the two ladies as he entered.

"The white man's God has triumphed," he said; "and the Aztecs have been defeated. You were right, Roger. Mere handful as they were, the white men have gained the day. Even now I hardly know how it came about. Never did my countrymen fight more bravely. For hours the Spaniards stood as a wall which we in vain tried to break; thousands fell on our side, but not for a moment did we waver. Others took their places until, as the hours went on, the Spaniards grew weary and victory seemed in our grasp. Their horsemen had charged through and through us, but though many chiefs were slain, it mattered little; the ranks closed up, and each time they fell back on their infantry having achieved nothing. Their horses were weary, and their attacks grew more feeble.

"Already our cries of victory were raised; an hour more, and not a Spaniard would have remained on foot. Just at this time my command had been ordered up, and we were fighting in the front rank. Suddenly I heard from all parts of the field loud cries. What had happened I knew not. We stood for a moment irresolute, not knowing what had befallen us elsewhere, then a panic seized my men. In vain I shouted and ordered; they were deaf to my voice, they were deaf to everything save fear. I was swept away with them as a leaf on a stream. When at last I freed myself from the torrent, and looked round, I saw that the whole army was in mad flight, while the Whites and Tlascalans, like hounds in pursuit of deer, were hanging on their rear, slaughtering all they overtook.

"In vain I gathered a few men and made a stand. It was useless; we were beaten down and overpowered. With the greatest difficulty I broke away and escaped; and had

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it not been for Bathalda, who fought side by side with me, I should have been taken by two or three fleet-footed Tlascalans. For the present all is lost; the fight cannot be renewed to-morrow, and before the sun sets the enemy will have reached the borders of Tlascala, and will be safe there."

"But what was it that caused so sudden a panic in your ranks?" Roger asked.

"It was the death of Cihuaca, our leader. The Spanish horse, headed, as I hear, by their general himself, burst through our ranks, cut their way to his litter, overthrew his body-guard, and slew him. His death would have mattered little, as the victory was already won. We needed no further orders, we had but to keep on fighting, and the end would soon have come. It was simply a panic; none knew what had happened. The word passed from man to man, 'All is lost!' and, like a herd of deer, our bravest soldiers fled. It is not a thing to reason about—the gods deserted us, and we were no longer men. That is all I can tell you about it."

And the chief flung himself down upon a pile of rugs. Wine and food were brought to him, and his wounds dressed.

"Roger," he said presently, "you must leave us to-night. Those of my followers who have escaped will soon make their way back, and my authority will be unable to save you. The priests would head the movement against you; you would be bound and carried to Mexico at once. The Whites, in their march to-morrow, will pass along the road four miles to the north of this. Conceal yourself in a wood until morning, and join them as they come along. As to the future you can make no plans now; you know not whether Cortez will retire to the coast and take ship there, or whether he will remain at Tlascala till reinforcements arrive from across the sea, and then again advance. When this is decided, you will know what course to take. Bathalda will accompany you, I have already given him orders to do so. He will bring down a message from you when you know what course has been decided on."

"And if you go, dear, I will go with you," Aménche said,

rising and putting her hand on Roger's shoulder. "Send for me, and Bathalda will escort me to you. I will bring such gems and gold as we can carry, so I shall not be a bride without a dowry. You promise to send for me, do you not, Roger?"

"Certainly I do," Roger said, pressing her to him; "if I quit this land alive you shall accompany me. I should be unworthy of your love indeed, Amenche, were I to prove faithless to you now. I regard you as being as truly my wife as if we were already married."

A short time afterwards Bathalda entered, and said that a number of soldiers were gathering in the courtyard, that some priests were among them, and that they were talking loudly about carrying the white man to Mexico, as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of the gods.

"There is no time to be lost," Cuitcatl said; "you had best go, Roger, before they surround the house and make escape impossible. I will fetch you a dark-coloured robe, so that you may escape unseen by anyone who may be approaching the house on this side."

So saying he left the room. Macluth signed to Bathalda to follow her, and they went out leaving Roger alone with Amenche. The girl's firmness deserted her now, and she threw herself weeping into Roger's arms. He consoled her by his assurances that their parting would not be for long, and that the next time they met, whatever the circumstances, he would make her his own.

"If we retire and you join me in Tlascala," he said; "we will be married by Father Olmedo in Christian fashion. If I return hither to you, we will be married at once in Mexican fashion, and go through the ceremony again when we join the Spaniards."

A few minutes later Cuitcatl returned, as did Maclutha and Bathalda, the latter bearing a basket with some provisions. The parting was brief, for the soldiers had brought news that the soldiers were becoming more and more clamorous, and were threatening to force an entrance if the white man were not handed over to them.

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Bathalda and Roger left by a small door at the back of the house, and passing through the garden took their way across the country. An hour's walking brought them to a wood near the road by which the Spaniards would travel in the morning, and there they sat down and awaited daylight. It was not until some hours after sunrise that the little army was seen approaching. On its flanks were large bodies of natives, who, however, contented themselves by hovering at a distance, except where the ground was impracticable for the action of cavalry, when they approached near enough to discharge their missiles at the line of troops. As the head of the column approached Roger threw off his Aztec cloak and, accompanied by Bathalda, issued from the wood and ran towards them, and in two or three minutes reached the horsemen who rode in the van.

"Why, Sancho!" Cortez exclaimed, as Roger ran up. "Is it you? We all thought you had fallen in the fight on the causeway. I am glad to see that you are safe. How did you escape?"

"I was, like many others, your Excellency, seized by the Aztecs, pulled down the causeway, and thrown into a boat. I should have been taken to Mexico and sacrificed, had it not been that the commander of the boat was a young cacique who had been my closest friend while dwelling in Tezcuco. He directed his men to row me across the lake, and took me to his house, which is but four miles away from here; there I have remained, having my wounds cared for until now. He took part in the fight at Otompan, and returned last evening with the news of your wonderful victory, and that you would pass along here this morning. I had a narrow escape last night, for some of the Aztec soldiers would have seized me and taken me a prisoner to Mexico; but the cacique aided me to escape, and gave me this follower of his as a guide. He is the same man who accompanied me in my flight from Tezcuco, and brought me to join you at Tlascala."

"I am right glad that you have escaped, Sancho: firstly, because every stout arm is sorely needed; secondly, because

Marina has grieved much for your loss. Truly, had you been her brother she could not have been more affected. She is in the centre of the column. You had best tarry here until she comes along, and then join her; she will be rejoiced to see you again."

Marina was indeed delighted when she caught sight of Roger's tall figure, and greeted him with much emotion. AS they walked together she heard how he had escaped, and she related to him how she, under the guard of the Tlascalans, had survived the terrible fight on the causeway, and then gave him a full account of the great battle on the previous day.

"And what are we going to do now?" Roger asked, when she had finished her narration. "Think you that we shall proceed to the coast, and take ship for Europe?"

Marina tossed her head scornfully.

"You do not know Cortez," she said; "or you would not ask such a question. He is already thinking how he can return and capture the capital."

"But unless he receives large reinforcements, that would seem impossible," Roger said. "You have yourself told me that had it not been for the fall of the Mexican leader, nothing could have saved you from destruction. The Aztec loss was heavy, no doubt; but they can fill up their ranks and take the field again in a week or two, with a force as large as that which fought at Otompan. They will not be dispirited, for they will know that it was but an accident which deprived them of victory, and will no longer deem the Spaniards invincible."

"It matters not," Marina said carelessly; "Cortez will manage things. Whatever he undertakes that he will carry out."

Late in the afternoon the army arrived at the barrier, across the road that marked the boundary of the Tlascalan territory. As they passed it the native allies burst into cries of gladness, and the Spaniards joined in the shout for to them, too, it seemed that their dangers were at an end, and that they had reached rest and abundance. Cortez and the leaders, however, were by no means sanguine as to the reception they

should meet with. Their alliance had brought misfortune upon the Tlascalans; little more than one thousand out of the eight thousand men who had marched with them had returned to tell the tale, the rest had fallen in the defence of the palace, in the fighting in the streets of Mexico, in the passage of the causeway, or in the battle of Otompan.

What would the Tlascalans think when they saw the broken remnant of the army, which had marched out so proudly, and knew that they brought on themselves the bitter enmity of the whole of the people of Anahuac? Might they not well be tempted to avert the wrath of the Aztecs, by falling upon the strangers, whose alliance had cost them so dearly?

At the place at which they halted for the night, a town of some fifteen thousand inhabitants, they were so kindly received by the natives that these apprehensions were somewhat laid to rest. The people came out to meet them, invited them to their houses, and treated them with the greatest hospitality. Here they remained three days, resting after their terrible fatigues. They were visited here by Maxixca, the most influential of the four great chiefs of the Tlascalans. He had been their most cordial friend on their first arrival, and his sentiments were in nowise changed by the misfortunes that had befallen them. Indeed his admiration for them was heightened by the manner in which they had withstood the whole power of the Aztec nation.

The cordial greeting given to them by one whose counsels were of the highest authority in the Tlascalan nation, restored the confidence of Cortez; and he accepted the invitation to continue his march at once to the capital, which was some fifteen miles away. The sick and wounded were placed in hammocks, which were carried on the shoulders of the friendly natives; and as the army approached the capital, crowds of people flocked out to meet them with cries of welcome, and escorted them into the city. Cortez and his officers took up their abode in the palace of Maxixca, and the rest of the army were quartered in that part of the city over which he exercised special authority.

Here they remained for some weeks, during which the wounded recovered from their injuries, the sick regained their strength in the bracing mountain air, and the whole army shook off the effects of the terrible hardships they had undergone while retreating from Mexico. Cortez, during this time, was confined to his couch, the wound on the hand which he had received in the conflict in the capital had been so inflamed and aggravated that he had lost the use of two fingers; and he had in the retreat received two severe wounds in the head, one of which became so inflamed from inattention, and from the fatigue and excitement he had gone through, that a portion of the bone had to be removed, and the general lay for some time at the point of death.

The news came in a day or two after the army reached its resting-place that a party of five horsemen and forty foot, who had gone forward in charge of invalids and treasure from Tlascala, had all been massacred, and twelve other soldiers marching in the same direction had also been killed. Upon the other hand they heard that all was quiet on the coast, and the friendly demeanour of the natives there was in no way changed. Roger, seeing for a time that nothing could be done, and that the troops were all eager to retire to the coast, despatched Bathalda a few days after his arrival at Tlascala, to Amenche, to say that he considered it certain that the Spaniards would retire, and that if she would come up to him in charge of Cuitcatl, whose safety he could guarantee while in Tlascalan territory, they might be united, as Malinche had promised to obtain the consent of Cortez, who always encouraged marriages between his followers and the natives. Before leaving, Bathalda handed to Roger a small bag.

"This," he said, "Maclutha gave to me for you; it was for that purpose she drew me aside before you started. She bade me not deliver it to you unless I was compelled to part from you. It contains some of the principal jewels taken from the treasure house, and she said, they might make you and the princess rich when you reach home. They are useless to her; she has no children, and now that Cacama has gone it is nought

to her who rules over Tezcuco. Moreover, these are but a small portion of the treasure in her possession."

Roger sent his warm thanks to Maclutha, and after Bathalda had started examined the contents of the bag, which he saw at once were very valuable—consisting of large pearls, diamonds, and other gems. On the evening of the second day after starting, Bathalda returned alone.

"I have very bad news," he said, "so bad that I hardly like to tell it. Four days since, an officer and guard arrived from Mexico with orders to arrest Cuitcatl, who was reported by the priests in the neighbourhood to have harboured a white man, and to have permitted him to escape. Maclutha and Amenche were also arrested, and though treated with every personal courtesy, were conducted to Mexico, where the official said they were for the present to remain in seclusion in the royal palace."

Roger was stupefied by the news. What was to be done he knew not. To desert Amenche was not to be thought of, and yet he saw no way of rejoining her, still less of rescuing her. In the present excited state of the Aztec population it would be certain death to venture beyond the frontier of Tlascala. He regarded his height now as the greatest misfortune; had he been short and slight he would have disguised himself as a Mexican, and under the guidance of Bathalda, have made his way to the capital; but with a figure which would be instantly remarked wherever he went this would be impossible. He entered the palace, and sent in an urgent message to Malinche, who was nursing Cortez. She listened patiently to his narrative.

"I pity you, Roger," she said when he had finished; "but there is nothing to be done."

"But I cannot march away and leave her," he said. "Rather than that I will disguise myself and take all risks, even though I know that I must fail."

"You must have patience, Roger," she said. "Cortez will, I feel sure, recover."

"But if so, it will only be to march down to the coast,"

Roger broke in. "The whole army are eager to be off before the Mexicans can gather their forces and be ready to fall upon them."

"The army may think what it likes, and wish what it likes," Malinche said quietly; "I am sure that Cortez will not go down to the coast; and what he wills he does. The others may grumble, but Cortez leads them like tame deer. When he is well enough to speak to them they will listen and obey him. His thoughts, ill as he is, are all of a fresh march to Mexico."

Hitherto Roger had been as desirous as any of his comrades of a return to the coast. It had seemed to him that there was no possibility of success, and he longed to be on his way to Europe with his Indian bride. But now everything was changed; he had come to have a faith in Cortez, almost as absolute as that entertained by the general's devoted followers; and he well knew that if he still thought there was a possibility of a successful march to Mexico, that march would be made; he now therefore waited with impatience for Cortez to be on his feet again.

But the waiting was long and tedious. Four weeks passed before the general was again himself. As soon as he became convalescent, the regulations which he issued for the army and the orders that he sent to the coast for every available man to be sent up to reinforce him, showed the soldiers that he had no intentions of retiring, and a remonstrance was signed by a large number of officers and soldiers against a further stay in the country. But Cortez was not shaken; he prayed them not to discredit the great name they had won, nor to leave their glorious enterprise for others more daring to finish. How could they with honour desert their allies who at their persuasion had taken up arms, and had shared their fortunes, and so leave them to the vengeance of the Aztecs? To retreat now would be but to proclaim their weakness and give confidence to their foes. If, however, there were any who preferred going home to the glory of this great enterprise, then in God's Name let them go, he would feel stronger

with but a few brave spirits with him than if surrounded by a host of false or cowardly men.

The troops of Narvaez had been the loudest in their complaints, but they were silenced now by the enthusiasm with which the soldiers of Cortez responded to the appeal of their leader; and all agreed to postpone their departure for the present.

A fresh source of danger speedily arose. Six Aztec ambassadors arrived, bearing presents and inviting the Tlascalans to forget old animosities, and to enter into a treaty with them. All the nations of Anahuac, they urged, should make common cause in defence of their country; and they conjured them by their common religion not to allow the white men to escape from their hands, but to sacrifice them at once to their gods.

These proposals were made at a solemn council called to receive them. There had, even before the arrival of the ambassadors, been a strong party in Tlascala who viewed the Spaniards with hostility as the authors of the heavy losses they had suffered, and as becoming, by their continued stay there, a burden to the state.

The head of this party was the young chief Xicotencatl, who had led the Tlascalan armies in the desperate resistance they offered to the Spaniards on their first coming. When the ambassadors had made their offers he rose and urged his hearers to assent to the proposal, saying that it were better to unite with their kindred and those of their own language, faith, and custom, than with these fierce strangers. The young warriors enthusiastically agreed; but, happily for the Spaniards the four great chiefs, one of whom was the father of Xicotencatl, were opposed to the proposal.

Maxixca especially combated the idea. "The Aztecs," he said, "are always false in speech and false in heart. It is fear that drives them now to offer their friendship to the Tlascalans, and when the cause for fear has passed they will again be hostile. What? Are we to sacrifice the white men to the gods—the men who have fought with us side by

side against our enemies, and who are now our guests? Were we to act thus it would be an act of the grossest perfidy."

Xicotencatl replied, but Maxixca, losing his temper, seized him and with sudden violence thrust him from the chamber. So unusual a step so astonished the assembly that it silenced all opposition, and the alliance with the Mexicans was unanimously rejected. Confident now that the Tlascalans were to be trusted, Cortez sent out expeditions composed of his own men and bodies of the allies, and inflicted terrible punishment on the districts where the isolated parties of Spaniards had been cut off and destroyed, and defeated the natives in several hardly fought battles, capturing their towns and enslaving the inhabitants.

Having thus restored the confidence of his followers and allies he prepared for a forward movement. Martin Lopez, shipbuilder to the expedition, had escaped the slaughter on the causeway, and he now ordered him to build at Tlascala thirteen ships, which could be taken to pieces and carried on the shoulders of the Indians, to be launched on Lake Tezcuco. The sails, rigging, and ironwork were to be brought from the coast, where they had been stored since Cortez had sunk his ships. The Tlascalans placed a great number of men at the shipbuilders' disposal; timber was cut from the forest; pitch, an article unknown to the natives, obtained from the pines; new arms were manufactured; powder was made with sulphur obtained from the volcanoes; and the work, heavy though it was, was rapidly brought to a conclusion.

While it was going on, however, a terrible scourge swept over the country. Small-pox, a disease hitherto unknown there, broke out on the sea-coast and swept across Mexico, carrying off great numbers—among the victims being Maxixca, the faithful friend of the Spaniards, and Cuitlahua, Montezuma's successor. The latter was succeeded by Guatimozin, nephew of the two last monarchs; who had married his cousin, one of Montezuma's daughters. Like Cuitlahua he was a gallant prince, and had distinguished himself greatly in the attacks on the Spaniards in Mexico. He continued the preparations

Cuitlahua had begun for the defence; but, like him, was greatly hampered by the fact that a large proportion of the tribes recently conquered by the Aztecs had seized the opportunity caused by the confusion in the empire to throw off their allegiance; the royal orders being really obeyed only by the population of the Valley of Mexico itself.

Before starting on his march towards Mexico, Cortez permitted several of his companions, who were disinclined to face a renewal of the trials and hardships they had suffered, to leave, placing his best ship at their disposal. Their loss was more than made up by the capture of two vessels sent by Velasquez, who was ignorant of the fate which had befallen Nurvaez, and who considered it certain that Cortez was a prisoner in his hands. The ships sailed into port, where the captains and crews were at once seized, and were then easily persuaded to join Cortez. Two ships fitted out by the Governor of Jamaica also put into port, to repair damages after a storm; and their crews were also persuaded by the liberal promises of Cortez to abandon their service and join him. He thus received a reinforcement of at least a hundred and fifty well-armed men, together with fifty horses.

But this was not the end of the good fortune of Cortez: a merchant ship, laden with arms and military stores, touched at Cuba; and the captain, hearing of the discoveries in Mexico, thought that he should find a good market there. He therefore sailed to Vera Cruz, where his ship and cargo were purchased by Cortez, and the crew swelled the force under him. By Christmas everything was ready for the advance; the army now amounted to six hundred men, forty of whom were cavalry, with eighty musketeers and cross-bowmen. It had also nine cannon taken from the ships. The force of the native allies which joined them was estimated at from one hundred and ten thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand, and consisted not only of the Tlascalcan troops, but of those of Cholula, Tepeaca, and other neighbouring towns, who, after their defeat by Cortez had submitted themselves to the Spanish rule.

But Cortez had no idea of taking all these with him, as it would be difficult to obtain provisions for such a host; and he left them behind, to bring on the vessels when completed, and to aid in further operations. He himself marched with the Spaniards and a small body of allies, and reached Tezcuco without opposition. The prince whom Montezuma had appointed to succeed Cacama, fearing the vengeance of the population, had fled to Tlascala; but returning, in hopes of finding a party there in his favour, was seized and put to death by Coanaco, another brother, who had been recognized as king by the Tezucans.

When the Spaniards approached the city they found it almost entirely deserted, the inhabitants having fled across the lake to Mexico. Their ruler had accompanied them, and Cortez appointed another brother in his place. This prince lived but a few months, and was succeeded by another member of the royal house—the prince who had, during Cacama's lifetime obtained a large portion of his dominion, and who proved a valiant and faithful ally of the Spaniards in their struggle with his countrymen.

The Tezucans gradually returned after Cortez had nominated a new sovereign, and Cortez at once set a large number of them to dig a canal from the town itself to the lake, so that the men putting together the ships could labour under his very eye.

Several of the cities round sent in to make their submission; and a week after his arrival Cortez marched with a body of Spaniards and allies against Iztapalapan, a town of fifty thousand inhabitants, lying near the narrow tongue of land dividing the great lake from that of Xochicalco. The natives came out to meet them, and fought bravely, but were driven into the city. The greater part of those who could not escape were slaughtered. While engaged in the work of plunder the Spaniards were alarmed by a rush of water, the natives having broken the bank of the great lake. The troops with the greatest difficulty escaped with their lives, many of the allies being drowned.

The fate of Iztapalapan excited consternation among the other cities, and many sent in to make their submission, among them Otompan and Chalco. Not only had the Mexican Empire fallen to pieces by the detachment of its distant provinces, but even near home long smouldering rivalries broke into flame. The Aztecs were but a small portion even of the people of the Valley of Mexico, and the greater portion of these were glad to take advantage of the distress of the capital, to break up the union that had so long existed. Cortez by promises and presents assisted the work.

After some weeks' stay at Tezcuco, the news came that the ships were all completed, and ready to be carried down; and two hundred foot and fifteen horse, under the command of Sandoval, were sent to escort them. But scarcely had he reached the frontier of Tlascala, than he saw a vast procession advancing. The ships had already been put together and tried on a lake among the hills, and were now being brought down in pieces by an immense number of porters with great military escort. Sandoval sent the larger portion of the Indian escort home, but kept twenty thousand of the best warriors. After four days of painful labour the host of porters and fighting men reached Tezcuco.

It was, indeed, an immense undertaking that had been accomplished, for the whole of the wood and iron work of thirteen ships had to be carried for upwards of sixty miles, over a difficult and mountainous country.

A few days later Cortez took half of his Spanish force and the whole of his allies, and started on an expedition to reconnoitre the capital, and to punish some of the towns which had returned insolent answers in reply to his summons. The town of Xaltocan, standing on an island, was first attacked; the dyke leading to it was found to be cut through, and the Spaniards for a time suffered greatly. They found a ford, however; reached the town, and put all who resisted to the sword. Three other towns, which had been deserted by their inhabitants, were occupied and sacked. They then marched against Tlacopan, and after a battle outside the town occupied

the suburbs. Another hot fight was necessary before the town was fully taken.

Here the Spaniards halted for some days, fighting almost daily with the Aztecs. In one encounter, Cortez allowed himself to be decoyed on to the great causeway upon which he had before suffered such disaster. When he was half-way across the Aztecs turned, reinforcements arrived from the city, swarms of canoes attacked the Spaniards in flank, and it was only after desperate fighting and some loss that they regained the mainland.

Having accomplished their object, the force returned to Tezucuo, greatly harassed on the march by the enemy. Other expeditions were undertaken. During these events the work of putting together the vessels was continued, and, to the great satisfaction of the Spaniards, news reached them from the coast of the arrival of three ships with reinforcements: two hundred men, seventy or eighty horses, arms, and ammunition.

When these reached Tezucuo, Cortez felt confident that he should now be able to overcome all opposition. On the fifth of April he again started on an expedition; passing through some deep gorges he attempted to carry a mountain fortress, but was repulsed with loss, from the volleys of stones and rocks rolled down upon the assailants.

After several other battles they neared Xochimileo, one of the richest of the Aztec towns. Like Mexico, it stood in the water, but at a small distance from the edge of the lake. This was only captured after desperate fighting, Cortez himself having a narrow escape of his life.

The next morning at dawn, great numbers of Aztecs landed from canoes, and fell upon the Spaniards, and it was only after a long and desperate struggle that the latter gained the day. They now continued their march to Tlacopan, the enemy following closely, and striking whenever they saw an opportunity, and the troops were glad, indeed, when they again reached Tezucuo. By this time the canal was finished and the ships were put together, and after discovering and punishing another conspiracy against his life, Cortez gave orders for the

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fleet to advance. Solemn Mass was held, and then the vessels, in the sight of an enormous concourse of people, dropped down the canal one after the other and reached the lake.

Cortez mustered his men and found that he had eighty-seven horse; eight hundred and eighteen foot, of which one hundred and eighteen were musketeers or cross-bowmen; three large iron field-pieces, and fifteen light brass guns. Three hundred of the men were told off to man the ships.

The Indian confederates arrived punctually: fifty thousand Tlascalans, and a vast number of levies from the other tribes.

The army was divided into three corps: one was to take up its post under Alvarado at Tlacopan; another, under Olid, was to aid in capturing the causeway; while Sandoval had command of the third, whose movements were to be determined by circumstances. Cortez himself took charge of the fleet.

A quarrel arose between a Spanish soldier and a Tlascalan chief, who was a relation of Xicotencatl, who at once left the army, and started for Tlascala. He had always been bitterly hostile to the Spaniards; and Cortez saw that unless the movement was stopped it might become very serious. He sent a party of natives after him, with instructions to prevail upon him if possible to return. He refused to do so. Cortez despatched a body of cavalry in pursuit, arrested him in Tlascala, brought him down to Tezcuco, and there hung him in the sight of his own countrymen.

The divisions of Alvarado and Olid met with no resistance in establishing themselves at Tlacopan. They cut the reservoir that supplied the city with fresh water, the great lake being salt. The next day the two divisions marched on to the causeway to make themselves masters, if possible, of the first bridge. The natives pursued their former tactics, desperately defending barricades thrown across the causeway, and attacking the invaders with a crowd of missiles from canoes. After a long and obstinate fight the Spaniards and their allies were obliged to fall back with considerable loss, and Olid drew off with his division to his station commanding the other causeway.

Iztapalapan having been again occupied by the enemy,

Sandoval's division attacked them by land while Cortez with his fleet lay off the shore. After capturing the town, Cortez turned his attention to the canoes of the natives which darkened the surface of the lake. At this moment a fresh breeze sprang up, and the ships, spreading their canvas, dashed amongst the canoes, overturning and destroying great numbers, while the cannon tore others to pieces with discharges of bullets, and comparatively few succeeded in regaining the city. It was now getting nearly dark, and the fleet coasted along the great southern causeway to the fort of Xoloc, where another branch of the causeway joined the main dyke.

The fort was feebly garrisoned. Cortez landed his soldiers and carried it by storm. Here he established his head-quarters, landing some of the cannon from the ships to strengthen the position. He was now within half a league of the city, and two out of the three great approaches were already in his hands. Night and day the natives attacked the garrison, but the ships and the guns in positions repulsed their assaults. After some days' delay a simultaneous attack was made by the Spaniards. Two of the ships, one on each side of the causeway, advanced abreast of the army, sweeping the dyke with their fire; the enemy were driven back, and Cortez, passing gap after gap, reached the island on which the city stood. Behind them, as they advanced, the native allies filled up the breaches, and made them practicable for artillery and cavalry, and as soon as the work was completed, the Spaniards who had already passed were reinforced by large numbers of their allies.

CHAPTER XXI.

A VICTIM FOR THE GODS.

THE street which the Spaniards entered after leaving the causeway intersected the city from north to south. It was broad and perfectly straight, and from the roofs of the

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houses which lined it, a storm of missiles was poured on the Spaniards as they advanced. Cortez set the allies to work to level the houses as fast as the Spaniards won their way along the street. This they did until they reached the first canal; the bridge here had been broken down, and after the Indians had crossed, the temporary planks were pulled after them, and they joined their countrymen behind a solid rampart of stone, erected on the other side of the canal.

It was not until after two hours' hard fighting and the use of artillery, that this obstacle was cleared away, and the Spaniards wading across the canal pressed forward without further resistance, until they reached the great square, on one side of which stood the palace they had so long occupied. The Aztecs—disheartened at the manner in which all the defences on which they relied had been captured by the Spaniards, and by their presence in the heart of the city—for some time desisted from their efforts; but they were roused to fury as a body of Spaniards rushed up the winding terraces to the summit of the great temple, and hurled the priests from its summit.

Then with a yell of fury they threw themselves upon their enemies; their headlong rush swept the Spaniards back into the square, when they were attacked by bodies of natives pouring down every street. For once the Spaniards lost their presence of mind, fell into disorder, and were swept before the torrent down the street which they had just traversed. In vain Cortez attempted to stem the stream, the panic spread to the allies, and the whole mass were flying before the natives, when a body of cavalry came up and plunged into the crowd. The natives were shaken by the appearance of the enemies they feared so much, and Cortez taking advantage of the confusion rallied his followers, and again drove the Aztecs back into the square.

Night was now at hand, and dragging off the cannon which had been abandoned in their flight, the force marched off in good order, though hotly pressed by the natives, and retired to Xoloc. Alvarado and Sandoval also succeeded in crossing their respective causeways, but neither of them could penetrate

into the city. The attack had failed, but it had strengthened the position of the Spaniards, for seeing the speedy manner in which they had overcome all the defences erected by the Mexicans, many of the cities which had hitherto stood aloof, now sent in their submission and supplied levies to assist them in their work, while Ixtlilxochitl, who had now become Lord of Tezcuco, and was a strong adherent of the Spaniards, brought up a force of fifty thousand Tezucans, who were divided among the three armies.

Another simultaneous attack was now made, the advance along the causeway being, as before, covered by the ships; but the enemy fought stoutly, and some hours elapsed before the Spaniards again entered the city. The advance was now more easy than on the previous occasion, owing to the destruction of the buildings bordering the streets. The natives, however, still fought with the greatest obstinacy; but the great square was at last reached.

Thinking to discourage the natives by the destruction of some of the principal edifices, Cortez ordered the palace which had served as the former barracks to be set on fire, as also the house of birds adjoining Montezuma's palace, and these were soon a mass of flames. The Aztecs, however, were infuriated rather than intimidated, and the fight raged with greater fury than ever. Having accomplished his object, Cortez again gave the order to fall back, and covered by the cavalry retired down the street, so desperately assailed by the natives, that but few men reached the fort unwounded.

Day after day the same tactics were repeated, the Mexicans every night repairing the breaches cleared out every day by the Spanish allies. Cortez found it impossible to guard the causeway and prevent this, the soldiers being already overcome by the fatigue of their daily encounters. Alvarado's division, however, held at night the ground they won in the daytime; but the troops suffered dreadfully from the incessant toil, and from the rain which poured down in torrents. The soldiers of Cortez fared little better, for the buildings in the fort of Xoloc afforded shelter but to few, and the rest had to

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sleep on the causeway in its rear, exposed to all the tempestuous weather.

Frequently, too, they were called up to battle, for the Aztec emperor, contrary to the usual practice of his countrymen, frequently attacked by night, often making simultaneous attacks on the three divisions on the causeways, while at the same moment troops from the neighbouring towns attacked their camps in the rear. He did not content himself with open attacks, but resorted to stratagem. On one occasion he had a large number of canoes in ambushade among some tall reeds bordering the lake. Several large boats then rowed near the Spanish vessels. Believing that they were filled with provisions intended for the city two of the smaller vessels pursued them. The Aztec boats made for the reeds, the Spaniards followed, and presently struck upon submerged timbers the Indians had driven in. They were instantly attacked by the whole fleet of canoes, most of the men were wounded, and several, including the two captains, slain, and one of the Spanish craft captured.

It was now three months since the siege had begun, and the attitude of the Mexicans was as bold and defiant as ever. Several attempts which Cortez had made to open negotiations with the young emperor had been received with scorn. It was certain that, sooner or later, famine would do its work, for the approaches to the city were all in the hands of the Spaniards; and as the towns of the lake were either friendly or overawed by the great army of their allies, even the canoes which at first made their way in at night with provisions had ceased to steal across in the darkness. The great native levies were of little use to the Spaniards in the absolute fighting, but they did good service by overawing the towns, making expeditions against the tribes that had not yet consented to throw in their lot with the invaders, and by sweeping in provisions from a wide extent of country.

But to wait until famine did its work little suited the spirit of the Spaniards. The process would assuredly be a long one, for men who fought so stoutly would resist starvation

with equal tenacity; besides, the duration of the siege was already beginning to excite discontent among the allies, whose wars were generally of very short duration. The Spaniards, too, were suffering from severe illness brought on by fatigue, exposure, and hardship. It was now determined to make a grand effort to obtain possession of the great market of Tlatelolco, which lay on the north-western part of the city. Its possession would enable the force of Cortez to join hands with those of Alvarado and Sandoval; and the spacious market itself, with its halls and porticoes, would furnish accommodation for the army, and enable them to attack the city at close quarters, instead of having to fight their way every day along the causeway.

Sandoval was to join Alvarado, sending seventy picked troops to support Cortez. Advancing along the causeway, and supported not only by the ships, but by a countless host of canoes filled with the allies of the lake cities, who penetrated the canals, and caused confusion in the rear of the Aztecs, the division of Cortez cleared the suburbs of their opponents, and then advanced towards the square of Tlatelolco by three great streets. Alderete commanded the force that advanced by the main central avenue. This was a raised causeway with canals running on either side of the road. Tapia and a brother of Alvarado commanded one of the other columns, while Cortez led the third. A small body of cavalry with three guns remained in reserve in the great street leading to the causeway, and here the column were to rally in case of disaster.

The three columns advanced simultaneously. The Spanish pressed the Aztecs back before them; their allies filled up the canals as they took them one by one; the Tlascalans stormed the houses, and attacked the enemy on their roofs, while the canoes engaged those of the Aztecs, and so prevented them from interfering with the men occupied in filling up the breaches. The parallel streets were near enough to each other for the Spaniards to hear the shouts of their companions in the other columns, and to know that all were gaining ground steadily. The enemy in the streets fought with less obstinacy than usual; and Cortez, with his usual keen-sightedness, at once apprehended

that the feebleness of the resistance indicated some device, and that the Aztecs were allowing them to advance only to lead them into a trap.

He had received a message from Alderete saying that he was getting on fast, and that he was but a short distance from the great square. Fearing that this officer, eager to be the first to gain the market-place, was not taking proper precautions to secure his retreat, Cortez, with a small body of troops, retraced his steps, and turned up the street by which Alderete's column had advanced. He had gone but a short distance, when he saw that his stringent orders had been neglected; for he came upon an opening some thirty feet wide, full of water at least twelve feet deep. A slight attempt only had been made to stop the gap; and stones and timber lying by the side showed that it had been abandoned as soon as commenced.

The general saw, too, that the road had been narrowed as it approached this point, and that the work had evidently been recently done. Much alarmed at the consequence of this neglect, he at once set his men to fill up the breach, but they had scarcely begun the operation when a terrific yell arose, drowning the mingled clamour of the distant conflict.

Alderete had, as Cortez supposed, pressed on the retreating Aztecs with too great eagerness; he had carried the barricades which defended the breach, and had given orders that the chasm should be filled up. But in their eagerness to be first in the square, the Spaniards had pressed on, none caring to stop to see that the allies carried out the order; so, taking position after position, they pressed on until they were close to the square.

Suddenly the horn of Guatimozin, the emperor, sent forth a piercing note from the summit of a temple. As if by magic the retreating Aztecs turned and fell on their pursuers, while swarms of warriors from the adjoining streets, lanes, and corners attacked the advancing column. Taken completely by surprise, bewildered by the suddenness and fury of the onslaught, appalled by the terrific war-yells, smitten down by the rain of missiles from the Aztecs, the Spaniards fell into

confusion, and were swept down the street like foam on the crest of a wave. In vain their leaders attempted to rally them. Their voices were drowned in the din, and their followers, panic-stricken, now thought only of preserving their lives. On they came until they reached the edge of the cut. Here some plunged in, others were pushed in by the pressure from behind.

Those who could swim were pulled down by their struggling comrades. Some got across and tried to climb the slippery side of the dyke, but fell back and were seized by the Aztecs, whose canoes now dashed up and added to the confusion by hurling a storm of missiles into the crowd. Cortez, with his little party, kept his station on the other side of the breach. They were already surrounded by Aztecs, who had landed on the causeway behind them, but held their ground desperately, and endeavoured, as far as possible, to assist their comrades to climb out of the water.

Cortez was speedily recognized and storms of missiles were poured upon him, but these glanced harmlessly from his helmet and armour. Six of the Aztecs threw themselves upon him together, and made a desperate effort to drag him into their boat. In the struggle he received a severe wound in the leg and fell. Olid, one of his followers, sprang to his rescue, severed the arm of one of the natives and ran another through the body, and being joined by a comrade named Lerma and by a Tlascalan chief, stood over the body of Cortez and drove off his foes, dispatching three more of his assailants; but Olid fell mortally wounded by the side of his leader. Quinones, the captain of the guard, with several of his men now fought his way up, lifted Cortez from the water and laid him on the road. One of his pages brought up his horse, but fell, wounded in the throat by a javelin. Guzman, the chamberlain, then seized the bridle, and held it while Cortez was helped into the saddle, but was himself seized by the Aztecs and carried off in a canoe.

Cortez, wounded as he was, would still have fought on, but Quinones, taking his horse by the bridle, turned it to the

rear, exclaiming that his leader's life was "too important to the army to be thrown away there!"

The mass of fugitives poured along the causeway. The road was soft, and was so cut up that it was knee deep in mud, and in some places the water of the canals here met across it. Those on the flanks were often forced by the pressure down the slippery sides, and were instantly captured and carried off by the canoes of the enemy. Cortez's standard-bearer was among those who fell in the canal, but he succeeded in recovering his footing and saved the standard.

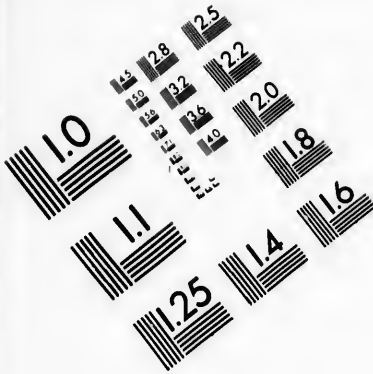
At last the fugitives reached the spot where the cannon and cavalry had been placed in reserve. Here Cortez rallied them, and charged the Aztecs with the little body of horse while the artillery opened a hot fire upon them. He then sent orders to the other two columns to fall back, and when these had rejoined him the division retired, Cortez covering the movement with the cavalry.

As soon as they were freed from the city, Tapia was sent round on horseback to acquaint the other commanders of the failure. They had advanced at the same time as Cortez, and had on their side nearly gained the square, when they, too, were startled by the blast of Guatimozin's horn and by the terrible yell that followed it. Then they heard the sound of battle, which had before been clearly audible, roll away in the distance, and knew that the division of Cortez had been driven back.

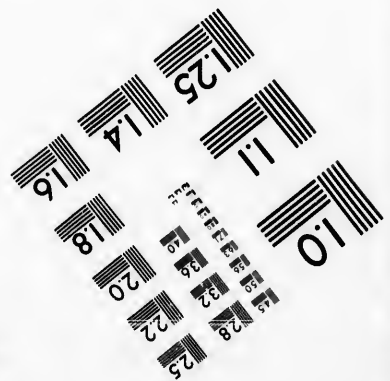
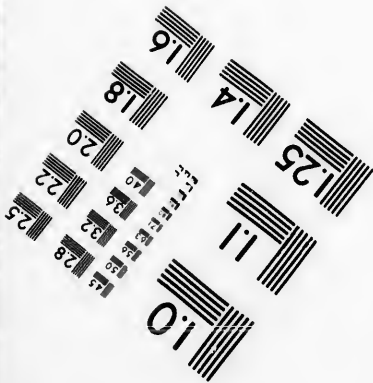
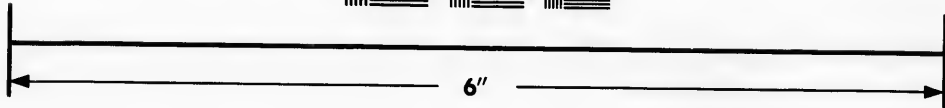
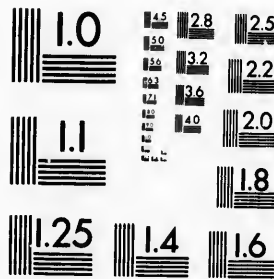
In a short time the attack upon themselves increased in fury, as the troops who had been engaged with Cortez returned and joined in the attack upon them. Two or three bloody heads were thrown among them with shouts of "Malinzin!"

Although Sandoval and Alvarado did not credit the death of their commander they felt that it was useless to persevere, and indeed were unable to withstand the furious assaults of the Aztecs. With great difficulty they drew off their troops to the entrenchment on the causeway, and here the guns of the ships sweeping the road drove back their assailants. The greatest anxiety prevailed as to the fate of Cortez, until Tapia





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arrived, bleeding from several wounds which he had received from parties of men whom Guatimozin had stationed to interrupt the communication between the two camps.

Sandoval at once rode round. He, too, was attacked on the road, but his armour and that of his horse protected him from the missiles showered upon them. On arriving at the camp he found the troops much dispirited. Numbers had been killed and wounded, and no less than sixty-two Spaniards, with a multitude of allies, had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Indeed, the column around Alverete had been almost entirely destroyed, and two guns and seven horses had been lost. Cortez explained to his follower the cause of the disaster, and told Sandoval that as he should be unable to take the field for a few days, he must take his place and watch over the safety of the camps.

Roger Hawkshaw had borne his full share in the desperate conflicts that had taken place. In the previous combats he had fought only to preserve his own life, but now he was eager for the fray: his friend Cuitatl and his promised bride were prisoners in Mexico, and he fought now to deliver them. It was nearly a year from the time when he had first retreated along the fatal causeway, and in that time his frame had broadened out and his strength increased, and so terrible were the blows he dealt that Cortez himself had several times spoken to him in terms of approval of his valour, and had appointed him to be one of his own body-guard. He had stood beside him at the edge of the breach, and had done good service there.

"You fight like a paladin," Cortez said, as Roger cut down three natives who had rushed upon him; "but see, Sancho, put up your sword for a minute and take up that pike. If you hand the end to those poor fellows in the water your strength will be sufficient to haul them up."

Roger at once set to at the work of saving life, and dragged up more than a score of men who would otherwise have been drowned. He heard the cry which was raised when Cortez was attacked, and throwing down his pike and drawing his

sword turned to rush to his assistance, but at this moment two Mexicans threw themselves upon him, his foot slipped in the mud, and in another moment he and his two assailants were rolling down the deep bank into the water.

With a mighty effort he freed himself from their grasp and gaining the bank tried to climb up; but a canoe dashed up alongside, a dozen Mexicans threw themselves upon him, and with a triumphant shout drew him into the boat, which at once paddled off from the scene of conflict. Roger as he lay at the bottom of the canoe felt that all hope was over. He knew that the Aztecs never spared a captive taken in war, and that all who fell into their hands were destined for the altars of their gods. He regretted deeply that he had not fallen in battle, but determined that at any rate he would not die tamely, and resolved that rather than be slaughtered in cold blood on the altar, when the time came, he would offer so desperate a resistance that they would be forced to kill him.

Passing along several canals, the canoe stopped at some stairs. Roger was taken out, and led through a shouting crowd to a great temple, where he was thrust into a prison-room already occupied by several Spaniards. Their numbers increased until they amounted to twenty. Few words were spoken among the prisoners; their arms were free, but their legs firmly secured with ropes; and ten armed Aztecs kept watch over them, to see that they made no attempt to unfasten their bonds. One of the prisoners Roger saw, to his regret, was his friend Juan. He was severely wounded in several places, as indeed was Roger himself, although in the excitement of the battle, he had scarce noticed it.

"Well, lad!" the old soldier said. "This is a bad ending of our gold-seeking. Who would have thought that it was to be one's lot first to be murdered on the altars of a hideous god, and then to furnish a meal to a race of savages?"

"The furnishing the meal does not trouble me," Roger replied. "Whether one is drowned and eaten by fishes, or killed and eaten by Aztecs, makes, as far as I can see, but little difference to one. However, I don't quite make up my mind

to the worst yet, Juan. They must have captured a great number of us, for I saw many carried off who are not here, besides a multitude of Tascalans and our other allies. I do not suppose they will sacrifice us all at once, but are likely to take so many a day. In that case we may have the luck to be among the last, and before our turn comes the Spaniards may be masters of the town.

Juan shook his head: "It is just as well to hope, lad; but I think the chances are next to nothing. Even if Cortez himself gets out safe, and the troops draw off without much further loss, it will be some days before they will attack again, after such a maiming as we got this time. Even then their chances of success will be no better than they were to-day; worse, in fact, for we have lost something like a sixth of our force, beside what may have fallen in the attack from the other side, put it at a quarter altogether. Our natives will be dispirited by their defeat to-day, and the Aztecs will have gained in confidence. By St. James, but those fellows fight well! Who would have thought when we saw them bowing and smiling when we first entered in the city, and submitting so meekly to everything that they could fight like fiends? Never did I see men so reckless of life. Pedro has fallen; I loved him as a son. But far better dead than here."

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear that he has fallen, Juan. I feared that he had, for he would not have let you be captured had he been alive. I don't give up all hope for ourselves. The Mexicans fight like heroes, but in the end we must win in spite of their valour. Even if we do not take the town by storm, which I don't think we ever should do if it were provisioned, we shall take it by hunger. They must be well-nigh starving now. In another month there will not be a soul alive in the city. You do not think there is any chance of our making our escape?"

"Not unless wings could sprout out from our shoulders," Juan said, "and we could fly through the air. You may be sure these fellows will keep too sharp a look-out upon us to

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give us the shadow of a chance ; besides, if we were to get out, we could not go on foot without being detected. You might manage, lad, with a dark night to hide your colour, and with the aid of a native dress, for you can speak their tongue ; but as for me the idea is hopeless, and not to be thought of. No, no, lad, I do not delude myself ; my time has come, and I shall bear it I hope, like a man, and a Christian."

From time to time Aztecs came in to see that the prisoners were safe. From their conversation with the guards Roger gathered that the attack had everywhere failed, and that the Spaniards had retired to their camps. Late in the afternoon some priests entered ; two of the prisoners were selected by them, their bonds cut, and they were taken away. Soon afterwards, the sound of the great war-drum reverberated through the city. The Spaniards in their camps started to arms on hearing the sound ; but they were not long in understanding its meaning, for from their camps they beheld a great procession winding up the principal pyramid. Alvarado's camp, which was the nearest to the city, was a short mile away from the temple, and in the clear evening air the troops could see that there were five or six white figures among them.

As usual, the victims were decorated with plumes of feathers to do honour to their own sacrifice. They were driven along with blows, and when they reached the summit of the temple were seized and thrown one by one upon their backs upon the sacrificial stone, which was convex, so as to give a curve to their bodies. The principal priest then with a sharp stone knife cut through the skin and flesh, between two of the ribs, and plunging his hand into the orifice dragged out the heart, which he presented to the figure of the god. The sight, distant as it was, excited the Spaniards to the verge of madness, and if it had not been for their officers, they would have seized their weapons and rushed forward again to the attack to avenge the murder of their comrades.

The feelings of the captives, as they heard the sound of the drums, the shouts of the natives, and once or twice caught

the scream of agony of their comrades, were terrible. This was the fate that they, too, were to undergo, and men who had a hundred times looked death in battle in the face shuddered and trembled at their approaching doom.

Each day two of their number were taken, and the same terrible scene was gone through. Roger was rather surprised that he himself was not one of the first selected, as his height and figure made him specially conspicuous among his comrades; but he supposed that he was being one of those reserved for some special festival.

Whatever the famine might be in the city, the captives were well fed, for it was a point of honour among the Aztecs that all victims offered to the gods should be in good health and condition. The guards were changed every six hours, and on the third day, in the officer over the relief Roger recognized to his surprise and delight his friend Bathalda. The latter, as he entered, made a significant motion to Roger, as he caught his eye, to make no sign that he recognized him. The Aztecs as usual sat down in groups chatting. They had no fear whatever of the prisoners attempting to escape in the daytime, and it was only at night that they exercised any special vigilance in seeing that they did not attempt to unloose their bonds. Bathalda presently sauntered up into the corner in which Roger was sitting.

"How are my friends?" the latter asked, in a low voice.

"Well," Bathalda replied. "Cuitcatl explained to the young emperor the circumstances under which he came to know and assist you, and was at once restored to favour, and now commands a large body of troops here. I have not seen the princess, she is at the palace; Cuitcatl bade me tell you that they are working for you, and will rescue you before the time comes for your sacrifice, but at present the watch is too strict."

"But I may be chosen any day," Roger said.

Bathalda shook his head: "Cuitcatl has bribed the priests who choose the victims to leave you until the last; so you need not feel uneasiness on that score. Be patient and watchful. If any of your guard approach you and say, 'The time is at

hand,' you will know that he is a friend; act as he tells you. I dare not say more now."

Ten days passed, Juan had gone, and Roger had been much moved at parting with him—more so, indeed, than the old soldier himself, who had kept up firmly and was prepared to meet his fate with contempt for his enemies, in the assurance that his death would be terribly avenged. Bathalda had not reappeared. As the number of prisoners had decreased the guard had been diminished; and as there now only remained Roger and one other, and both were still bound, a single Aztec relieved the two who had the night before kept guard.

He stood indifferently gazing through the loophole until Roger's companion fell asleep; then he approached him and said: "The time is at hand. To-morrow the other will be taken, the number will be made up from the other prisons. At night Cuitcatl will be outside; the door here will not be bolted. You will have but one man to watch you; but we know not whom he may be, and may not be able to arrange with him. If we do he will give you the password; if not you must deal with him. The man who will follow me is in the secret; you must unfasten your ropes while he is here, and he will aid you to do them up again, so that, while to the eye they will seem secure, they can be shaken off instantly. Bathalda and another will accompany you. I do not know who the other is; but I was told that you would understand."

That other Roger felt sure must be Amenche; and his heart beat hotly at the thought that his dear princess would share his flight. The hours passed quickly; the next day the last Spaniard was taken, and no sooner had he been forced struggling and resisting from the chamber than the guard who, since he had taken up his post four hours before, had made no sign to Roger, gave the password agreed upon. The latter rose to his feet, and with the aid of the native unfastened the cords that bound his ankles together.

For half-an-hour he paced up and down the chamber to

restore the circulation to his feet. Then the guard replaced the cords, but did it in such a way that, though they seemed as tight and secure as before, they would at a slight effort fall off and leave him free. At eight o'clock in the evening the guard was relieved; he had told Roger that he was to listen for the cry of an owl outside, twice repeated; and that upon hearing this he would know that his friends were without. Roger listened anxiously for the password from his new guard; but as it did not come he concluded that Cuitcatl had not been able to bribe him, and that he must himself overpower the man. The Aztec placed himself at the loop-hole, and stood looking out, turning from time to time to see by the light of the torch which was fixed close to where Roger was lying, that he was making no attempt to release himself from his bonds.

It was not until nearly midnight that Roger heard the expected signal. No sooner was the second call given than he pulled the knot which kept the cords together, raised himself noiselessly to his feet and sprang upon the Aztec. Taken by surprise, the man was no more than a child in Roger's strong grasp. In a moment he was thrown down, his cloth was twisted round his mouth so as to prevent any cry from escaping him, and his arms were bound behind him with Roger's rope. Roger then took his sword and javelin and went to the door. As he had been told would be the case, the outer bolts were unfastened; passing along a passage he came to the outside gate. This was securely fastened, but Roger had no difficulty in scaling the roof of a building leaning against the outer wall; and on reaching this he pulled himself up and dropped down into the street beyond.

Three persons were standing at the gate, and he at once made towards them. One ran forward with a little cry, and threw herself into his arms. The others were, as he had expected, Cuitcatl and Bathalda. The former saluted him warmly.

"Thank the gods you are free, Roger," he said. "I have a canoe close at hand for you. Bathalda will accompany you

and the princess. I cannot leave: I am an Aztec, and shall fight until the last with our brave young emperor."

"I hope, Cuitcatl, that when the resistance is over—as it must be before long, for I know from the talk of the guards that famine is among you, and that hundreds are dying daily—I hope that I may be able to aid you as you are aiding me."

"I care not to live," Cuitcatl said; "the empire is lost."

"But there is no dishonour in that," Roger replied. "No men could defend themselves more bravely than you have done, and there is no disgrace in being vanquished by superior arms. I trust that you may live and be happy yet."

"Let us not stand here talking," the young cacique said.

"It is not as it was before; then you might walk through the city at midnight without meeting with a single person. We sleep no longer now, but make nightly attacks on the Spaniards; and at any moment bodies of troops may come along."

The little party moved forward, and in a minute descended the steps. Bathalda took his place in a small canoe lying there.

"Here is a weapon which will suit you better than that sword and javelin," he said, handing him a war-club, a heavy weapon with pieces of sharp-pointed obsidian fixed in it. Roger helped Aménche into the canoe, wrung Cuitcatl warmly by the hand, and then stepped in. "Go," the latter exclaimed; "I can hear troops approaching." So saying, he bounded swiftly away. Bathalda sat listening for a moment to discover the direction from which the troops were coming. As soon as he made out the soft tread of the shoeless feet, he dipped his paddle in the water, and the boat glided noiselessly away. It was not long before they emerged from the narrow water-way, on to the lake; and then the boat's head was turned in the direction in which lay the Tlacopan causeway.

Presently Aménche, who had been sitting nestled close to Roger—too happy even to speak—sat up and said: "Hush!"

Bathalda ceased rowing: "There is a large canoe coming up behind us," he said, listening intently. "I can hear others on the lake beyond us."

"We had better make into the shore again," Roger said. "and let them pass us."

The canoe, however, was not very far behind, and those on board caught sight of the little craft as she rowed in towards shore. It was unusual to see so small a boat at night; the idea that it might contain a spy occurred to them, and they shouted to them to stop. Bathalda exerted himself to the utmost, but the canoe came rapidly up to them. As the command to stop was again disregarded, a volley of javelins was discharged.

"We cannot escape," Bathalda said. "They will be upon us before we can land."

"Cease rowing," Roger said. "Amenche, lie still, dear, at the bottom of the boat. I will deal with them."

Seeing that the oarsmen had stopped paddling, the volley of javelins ceased; and the canoe, which contained some twenty men, ran alongside. As she did so Roger sprang on board her. Three or four of the natives were struck down in an instant with his terrible weapon. The others, as soon as they recovered from their astonishment, rose from their seats and attacked him. Their numbers were but of slight avail. Standing in the bow of the boat, and swinging his weapon round his head, Roger kept them off, beating down one each time his weapon fell.

In vain they tried to close with him; his great size, and the suddenness with which he had attacked them, acted upon their superstitious fears. They knew not what sort of being it was with whom they had to deal, and the terrible strength displayed and the instant fate that fell on all who approached him, appalled them. Roger soon took the offensive, and making his way along the boat, drove them back before him. At last, when more than half their number had fallen, the rest sprang overboard and swam to the shore. Roger had been wounded by three or four spear-thrusts, but these had been too hastily given to penetrate very deeply.

"I am unhurt, Amenche," he said, making his way forward again and stepping into the canoe. There was no reply. He

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MALINCHE UNDERTAKES THE CARE OF THE WOUNDED AMENCHI.

stooped over as she lay quietly there. "She has fainted," he said. "Row on, Bathalda. You had best give me the other paddle; I can hear boats coming in this direction. No doubt they heard the yells. Skirt along the shore, we shall be unseen close in, and if they approach us can take refuge in a canal."

But they passed along unnoticed. When they caught sight of the causeway, stretching away dimly in front of them, they again rowed out into the lake, and making a long circuit to avoid the canoes attacking Xoloc, the guns of which were firing hotly, came down on the causeway again in its roar. They were hailed as they approached, for the Spaniards were all under arms. Roger shouted that he was a friend who had escaped from the prison; and the Spaniards in return gave a shout of welcome. In another two minutes the canoe lay alongside the causeway. Bathalda sprang on shore, and held the canoe while Roger lifted Amenche up and stepped out. A dozen hands were held out to assist him to climb the slippery bank. His figure was known by them all; many exclamations of welcome greeted him, and many were the inquiries as to the other captives.

"I will tell you all about it directly. Bring the torch a little closer; I have a lady here who has fainted. We were attacked as we came out; the fight was a sharp one, and has scared her."

A soldier brought a torch, and as he did so Roger uttered a loud cry. Amenche's face was bloodless, and her eyes were closed. But it was not this that had caused Roger's cry. There was a dark stain on her white dress, and in its centre the feathered head of an arrow. While Bathalda and Roger had escaped the missiles with which those in the boat heralded their attack, an arrow had struck Amenche, as she turned when Roger sprang on board. So great was Roger's horror that he reeled, and would have fallen had not the soldiers standing round supported him.

"I think that she has 'but fainted from loss of blood," Bathalda said; and Roger, refusing all assistance, carried



Amenche to the fort through the ranks of the Spaniards, who were engaged hotly with their assailants in the canoes.

He bore her at once to the chamber occupied by Marina. She was up and dressed, for the attack was a hot one, and there was no sleep in Xoloc. She uttered a cry of welcome and gladness as Roger entered.

"I have escaped, Malinche," he said; "but I fear that she has died in saving me. I have brought her to you, as you are the only woman here."

Marina took the girl tenderly and laid her on a couch.

"I will see to her," she said softly. "Leave her to me, Roger."

As Roger, blinded with tears, left the room, an officer met him at the door, and told him that Cortez had just heard of his arrival and desired his presence. The general received him with great kindness.

"It is something to see one of my comrades back again, Sancho," he said. "I hear how sad a misfortune has befallen you; for I suppose the lady you brought ashore was she of whom Marina spoke to me. She told me that she did not give up all hope that you might return; for that the princess whom you loved was in the city, and would, she was sure, do all that she could to save your life."

"She did so, General"—Roger said, "and I fear at the cost of her own—she and a noble young cacique, who was a brother to me when I was living at Tezcuco."

"I will not trouble you now with questions," Cortez said; "but tell me—do you know whether any of the other prisoners are alive? Every evening we have marked that terrible procession to the summit of the temple. Fifty-eight have been sacrificed, but we know not exactly how many more remain, being ignorant which of our comrades fell and which were captured."

"I cannot tell," Roger replied. "I was the only one left out of twenty who were in prison together. If they were taken in the same proportion from the other prisons there can be but a few remaining now. I was set aside until the last

because the priest who had daily chosen out the victims had been bribed by my friend Cuitcatl."

Roger hastened away as soon as Cortez dismissed him, and hurried back to Malinche's apartment. Her Mexican attendant who was standing outside the door, opened it when she saw him approaching, and as she came up, Malinche stole out with her finger on her lips.

"We have taken out the arrow," she said, "She is still insensible; but the leech thinks that it is from loss of blood, and hopes that no vital part has been injured. More than that he cannot say at present. You had best have your own wounds attended to now. I will have a pile of rugs laid for you in this little room to the left, and will let you know if any change takes place."

"Do you think that there is any hope, Malinche?"

Malinche shook her head. "I know not, Roger. I have already sent off to the mainland to fetch a leech famous for his skill in the use of herbs. Our people have many simples of which you know nothing in Europe, and they are very skilful in the treatment of wounds—much more so, I think, than the white men."

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME.

AFTER having had his wounds dressed, Roger threw himself down upon the bed that had been prepared for him, and lay tossing for hours. Hitherto he had believed, and had often reproached himself for it, that he had not loved Aménche as she had loved him. She had loved him with the passion and devotion of the people of her race, and it was no figure of speech when she said that she was ready to give her life for him. Roger knew that until lately his love had been poor by the side of hers. From the time he had sailed from England

to his first meeting with her, he had pictured to himself that some day, when he came to command a ship of his own, he would marry his cousin, if she had borne him in mind since he parted with her on Plymouth Hoe. This dream had faded away from the time he had first met Aménche, and when Cacama had proposed the marriage to him he had accepted the offer gladly.

His chance of ever leaving the country at that time seemed slight, and he felt sure that he should be happy with Aménche. Since that time the girl's frank expression of her love for him, her tender devotion, and her willingness to sacrifice country and people and all to throw in her lot with him, had greatly heightened the feeling he had towards her, and he had come to love her truly; but still, perhaps, rather with the calm earnest affection of a brother than the passionate devotion of a lover. But now he knew that she had his whole heart. If she died it seemed of little consequence to him what became of his life. It was for his sake that she had risked everything, had left all—friends and home and country—and he felt that he would gladly die with her.

Morning was breaking before Malinche came into his room. "She is sensible," she said, "and my countryman who is with her thinks that she will live."

The relief was so great that Roger burst into tears.

"Come with me," Malinche said, taking his hand. "We do not think she knows what has happened, but she looks anxiously about the room. She is very, very weak, but the leech thinks that if she sees you, and knows that you are safe and well, it will rouse her and put her in the way of recovery. You must not talk to her or excite her in any way."

Roger followed Malinche into her room. Aménche was lying without a vestige of colour on her face, and with her eyes closed and her breathing so faint that Roger as he looked at her thought that she was dead.

"Take her hand and kneel down beside her," Malinche whispered.

Roger took the girl's hand; as he did so a slight tremour

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ran through her as if she recognized his touch. Then her eyes opened.

"Amenche, my darling, do you know me?" Roger said as he stooped his face close to hers.

Her face brightened suddenly, and a look of intense happiness came into her eyes.

"O Roger!" she whispered; "I dreamt that they had killed you."

"I am safe and well, as you see," he said; "they have hurt you, darling, but you will get better, and we shall be happy together. You must not talk, but I may stay by you if you will keep quiet. Drink this first," and he handed to her a cup that the Mexican doctor held out to him, and placing his arm under Amenche's head raised it and poured the liquid between her lips. Then he laid her head down again on the pillow, and kneeling beside her held her hand in his. She lay looking up into his face with an expression of quiet happiness, occasionally murmuring, "Dear Roger." Presently her eyelids drooped, and in a few minutes her regular breathing showed that she was asleep.

The Mexican doctor placed another cup of medicine within Roger's reach, and murmured in his ear, "I think that she will do now; give her this when she awakes. I shall be within call if I am wanted."

Amenche slept for some hours, and Roger, overcome by want of sleep and from the anxiety through which he had passed, dropped off many times into short dozes. He woke from one of these at a slight movement of Amenche's hand, and opened his eyes at the moment that she was opening hers.

"What has happened, Roger? and where am I?" she asked in wonder.

"First drink this medicine, and then I will tell you," he said. "You remember, dear, we were in the boat together, and we were attacked. An arrow struck you, but I knew nothing about it until I had reached the causeway and found you senseless, and brought you here to Malinche's room, and she and one of the doctors of your country dressed your

wound, and now you have been sleeping quietly for some hours."

"Oh yes," she said; "I remember now. I was struck with an arrow; it was a sharp pain, but I did not cry out, for you had need of all your strength and vigour. I lay there quietly and heard the din of fighting, and at last when I knew that you had conquered I felt a faintness stealing over me, and thought that I was dying, and then I remember nothing more; only it seemed that in my dreams you came to me and knelt by the side of me and kissed me, and now I know that that part is true; and I have been having such happy dreams ever since. But why should I lie here; cannot I get up?"

"No, dear; you are weak from loss of blood, and quiet is necessary. Lie here a minute; I will fetch the leech in to see how you are."

The Mexican was sleeping on some mats outside the door; he at once came in, and after examining Aménche pronounced her decidedly better. Malinche, who had given orders that she was to be informed as soon as the princess was awake, came in a minute or two, and a consultation was held, when it was decided that Aménche should at once be taken from the fort, which was crowded with soldiers, as well as exposed to the din and turmoil of the night attacks. Malinche went out and soon returned, saying that she had spoken to one of the Tezucan caciques in alliance with the Spaniards. He had at once offered to receive Aménche at his palace, which was situated but three miles from the end of the causeway.

"I cannot leave Roger again," the princess said when she understood what was proposed.

"There is no thought of your leaving him," Malinche said kindly; "Roger is to accompany you, he needs rest and peace almost as much as you do; besides he has been seriously wounded, though he makes light of it. The cacique has sent off a messenger for a party of his people to meet you; a boat will be in readiness to take you across the lake at sunset. You will be carried in litters from the landing-place to his palace."

This programme was carried out, and by nine o'clock that

evening Roger and Aménche were both settled in luxurious apartments in the cacique's palace.

Cortez, now recovered from his wounds, prepared for a fresh advance, which was this time to be conducted in a different manner. Against so stubborn and active a foe the advance must be irresistible, steady, and continued. In future no step backward was to be taken. Every breach, every canal, was to be filled up so firmly and solidly that it could never again be disturbed; and for this purpose every building—whether a private house, temple, or palace—was to be demolished. It was with the greatest reluctance that Cortez arrived at this determination: he would fain have saved the city intact, as the most glorious trophy of his success; but his experience showed him that with every house a fortress, every street cut up by canals, it was hopeless to expect to conquer it.

The Indian allies heard his intention with the greatest satisfaction, for there was ever in their mind the dread that should the white men depart, the Aztecs would take a terrible revenge upon their rebellious subjects. Enormous numbers of men were assembled and provided with implements for the work; this was steadily carried out, until the whole of the suburbs were levelled and a wide space round the city left open for the manœuvres of the cavalry and the play of the artillery. Before making the last attack, Cortez tried once more to persuade the emperor to yield, and sent three Aztec nobles who had been captured in one of the late fights to bear a message to him.

He told Guatimozin that he and his people had done all that brave men could, and that there remained no hope, no chance, of escape. Their provisions were exhausted, their communications cut off. Their vassals had deserted them, and the nations of Anahuac were banded against them. He prayed him, therefore, to have compassion on his brave subjects, who were daily perishing before his eyes, and on the fair city now fast crumbling into ruins. He begged him to acknowledge his allegiance to the sovereign of Spain; in which case he should be confirmed in his authority, and the persons, the property, and all the rights of the Aztecs should be respected.

The young monarch would have instantly refused the terms, but he called a council to deliberate upon them. Many would have accepted them, but the priests threw all their influence in the scale against it, reminding the king of the fate of Montezuma after all his hospitality to the Whites, of the seizure and imprisonment of Cacama, of the massacre of the nobles, of the profanation of the temple, and of the insatiable greed that had stripped the country of its treasures.

The answer to the Spaniards was given in the form of a tremendous sortie along each causeway; but the guns of the Spanish batteries and ships drove the assailants back, and the operations of destruction went on. Day by day the army of workers levelled the houses and filled the canals, although the Mexicans made incessant attacks upon the troops who covered the workmen. For several weeks the work continued, while the wretched inhabitants were fast wasting away with hunger; all the food stored up had long since been consumed, and the population reduced to feed on roots dug up in the gardens, on the bark of trees, leaves, and grass, and on such rats, mice, and lizards as they could capture.

The houses, as the besiegers advanced, were found to be full of dead, while in some lay men, women, and children in the last stage of famine; and yet, weakened and suffering as they were, the Aztecs maintained their resolution, rejecting every overture of Cortez. At last the division of Alvarado cleared its way into the great square, and a party mounting the great temple, where so many of their comrades had been massacred, defeated the Aztecs who guarded the position, slaughtered the priests and set fire to the sanctuary, and the next day the division of Cortez won their way to the same spot and joined that of Alvarado.

Seven-eighths of the city was now destroyed; and, with the exception of the king's palace and a few temples, all the buildings that had when they first saw it so excited the admiration of the Spaniards, and had made the city one of the loveliest in the world, had been levelled. In the portion that remained the whole of the Aztec population were crowded. Their

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number was still vast, for before the siege began the people from many of the surrounding cities had flocked into the capital. Pestilence was aiding famine in its work; and the Spanish writers say that "as the troops advanced the bodies lay so thick that it was impossible to walk without treading on them."

Again and again Cortez endeavoured to negotiate with the emperor. Although so reduced by weakness that they could scarce keep their feet, the Aztecs maintained their defiant attitude, and the advance of the allies recommenced. The Aztecs fought as bravely as ever; but they were so weakened that their missiles were no longer dangerous, and their arms could scarce lift their weapons. It was a dreadful carnage. The confederates, panting with hatred of the race that had subdued and so long humiliated them, showed no pity, and even when Cortez ordered that quarter should be shown to all who asked it, the allies refused to be checked, and the work of slaughter went on until the Spanish trumpets sounded a retreat.

During that day alone it was calculated that forty thousand persons had fallen. That night a mournful stillness reigned over the city. In silent despair, and yet with no thought of surrender, the Aztecs awaited their fate. The next morning, August 15th, 1521, the troops were formed up again; but before ordering the advance Cortez obtained an interview with some of the principal chiefs, and persuaded them to see the emperor, and try to induce him to surrender; but the answer came that Guatimozin was ready to die where he was, and would hold no parley with the Spanish commander. Cortez still postponed the assault for several hours; then, finding delay unavailing, he reluctantly gave the order for the attack to recommence.

As upon the previous day it was a mere slaughter. Many of the Aztecs sought to fly in canoes, but these were cut off by the fleet. Presently, however, while the butchery was still going on, the welcome news was brought that Guatimozin himself had been captured by one of the vessels. With him was his wife, the beautiful Princess Tecuichpo, a daughter of

Montezuma, and twenty nobles of high rank. The news of his capture spread rapidly through the fleet and city, and the feeble resistance the Aztecs still offered ceased at once. Guatimozin was brought before Cortez, and behaved with a dignity and calmness that excited the admiration and respect of the general and his followers.

The next morning, at the emperor's request, Cortez gave permission for all the survivors of the siege to leave the town, and issued strict orders both to the Spaniards and their savage allies that no insult or injury should be offered to them. For three days sad processions of men, women, and children—worn out with fatigue, wasted with fever and hunger, and in many cases scarred with wounds—made their way along the causeways. The number of men alone was variously estimated at from thirty to seventy thousand. The losses during the siege were also placed at varying figures by contemporary writers, the lowest estimate was one hundred and twenty thousand, while some writers place it at double that amount.

The higher figures probably approximate most nearly to the truth, for the population of the city, in itself very large, was enormously swelled by the vast number of persons from all the surrounding cities, who took refuge there at the approach of the Spaniards. The Spanish loss was comparatively small, the larger portion of it being incurred upon the day of the destruction of Alderete's column. The loss of the allies, however, was very large, as they were not provided, as were the Spaniards, with armour which defied the missiles of the enemy. Of the Tezcucans alone it is said that thirty thousand perished.

The amount of booty taken in the city was comparatively small, and the army was bitterly disappointed at the poor reward which it reaped for its labours and sacrifices. There can be no doubt that the Aztec treasures were removed and buried before the approach of the Spaniards to the city. Indeed, during the siege the Aztecs constantly taunted them with shouts that even if they ever took the city, they would find no gold there to reward their efforts.

The defence of the city of Mexico has been frequently likened to that of Jerusalem against Titus. In each case a vast population, ignorant of the arts of war, resisted with heroic constancy the efforts of a civilized enemy, and succumbed to hunger and disease rather than to the foe.

The fate of the Aztecs befell them because, while a conquering people, they had enslaved and tyrannized over the nations they subdued, extending to them no rights or privileges, but using them simply as means of supplying the pomp and luxury of the capital, and of providing men for its wars.

Even the cities of the valley, the near neighbours of Mexico, were kept in a galling state of dependence, and the result was that the whole of the Aztec Empire broke up at once and fell upon its oppressors as soon as the coming of the Spaniards afforded them the opportunity for retaliation and revenge. Had it not been for this it would have needed a force many times as numerous as that of Cortez to conquer an empire so extensive and populous, and composed of peoples so brave and fearless of death. Terrible as the destruction of life was in the capture of Mexico, the Spaniards were not open to blame for it, except in the massacre of the nobles, for which conduct Cortez was in no way responsible. The war was not conducted with the cruelty that too often distinguished the warfare of the Spaniards.

Cortez had certainly no desire to destroy the beautiful capital of the country he had conquered for Spain. The prisoners taken during the siege, and the people who came out and surrendered, were always treated with kindness, even when the Spaniards were maddened by the sight of the daily sacrifices of their countrymen by the Aztecs. Again and again during the siege Cortez endeavoured to induce the enemy to come to terms, and after the fighting was over the whole of the survivors were permitted to depart unharmed.

A fortnight after the fall of Mexico Aménche and Roger were both convalescent. Aménche's wound had after the first day caused but little anxiety; she had fainted from loss of blood and from the effects of the long strain which she had undergone from the time that she had heard that Roger was a captive in the hands of the Mexicans, and destined for sacrifice at the temple. Under the influence then of happiness, and of the care and attention she received, she was in two or three days well enough to get up and go into the adjoining room, and sit by the couch of Roger, who was prostrated by fever, the result of imprisonment, anxiety, and his wounds. For a time his life was in danger, but after the crisis had passed he too recovered rapidly.

Malinche came several times to see them, and a warm affection sprang up between her and Amenche.

"What do you mean to do, Roger?" she asked him one day when she found him alone.

"I mean to marry Amenche at once," he said, "and to go back to Europe if possible, without delay."

"I have managed that for you," Malinche said. "I spoke to Cortez yesterday. The city cannot resist many days longer, and after that we hope that there will be no more fighting; at any rate, I told him that you were so shaken from what you had gone through, it would be a long time before you would be fit to carry arms again, and that you desired greatly to go to Europe for a time; and he has consented that you shall go down to the coast with the first convoy of wounded as soon as the city falls. Of course he has given consent for your marriage with Amenche, and said when I asked him that she had fairly won you; he says that if you return hither he will give to Amenche a wide portion of her brother's dominions. I did not tell him that it was little likely he would ever see you out here again."

During the next fortnight Roger instructed Amenche in the outlines of the Christian faith, and the day before the convoy was to start, three weeks after the fall of Mexico, Father Olmedo received her into the Church, and the marriage ceremony took place. It was attended by Cortez and most of his leaders and by many of the native nobles.

Among them Roger was glad to meet Cuitcatl. He was one of the party who had been captured with the emperor, and had been at once released by Cortez when the latter was informed by Malinche that he had befriended and released Roger. That evening the two friends had a long talk together.

"You will be happy," Cuitcatl said, "and will come in time, in your home in your own country, to look back at this terrible time as a troubled dream. I do not mourn for Cacama or Maclutha; they are fortunate in escaping the troubles that yet remain for my unhappy country; for I well foresee that the Spaniards will gradually subdue those who have served them so well in their campaign against us. Their allies will in time become their subjects until the whole empire of the Aztecs will lie prostrate at their feet. But whatever happens I shall take no further part in it. I have fought by the side of

the Aztecs against my own countrymen; I have done my best to save our nation from falling under the dominion of the Spaniards. I shall retire now to my estates and devote myself to them. Cortez has given me a paper, signed by him, saying that I, although fighting against him, saved the life of a Spanish prisoner, who was the only one of those captured who escaped being sacrificed; and that, therefore, he orders all Spaniards to treat me with kindness and consideration, and confirms to me and my heirs to all time the possession of my estates free from all taxes or imposts whatever. Malinche obtained this document from him, and has induced the treasurer and chamberlain also to affix their seals to it, and she says that it will be undoubtedly respected.

"As you know, Roger, I should long ago have married my cousin, who was one of Maclutha's ladies in waiting, but we deferred it until these troubles should be over. I have been to Tezucuo to-day, and we shall be married at the end of the week, so that I have every hope of leading a quiet and happy life, and think that in the end these troubles will tend to the happiness of the people of the country. As a Tezcucan, I can acknowledge that the Aztec tyranny was a heavy one, that the people were sorely oppressed; the wholesale sacrifices at the temples, now abolished for ever, were the cause of constant wars; and I think that when the Spaniards once overcome all resistance, and establish a firm and stable government, the people will be happier than they ever could have been under the Aztec rule. What has become of Bathalda?"

"He accompanied us here, and then went off to your estates, saying that he should collect a few of his friends and occupy your house, to see that none took advantage of the troubles to plunder it. I recommend him to your care, Cuitcatl."

"There is no occasion to do that, Roger. He has been a faithful servant and friend, and shall in future be my right hand."

The next morning Malinche came to say farewell to them.

"How much has taken place in the last four years, Roger!" she said. "Then, I was a slave-girl; you were a captive in a strange country. What scenes we have passed through since then! I am sorry indeed that you are going, Roger," and the tears came into her eyes; "you were my first friend, and I

have loved you ever since as a brother. I shall miss you sorely, indeed; however, I know that you and Aménche will be happy together. Princess, I have something of yours," and she held up a heavy girdle. Aménche gave a cry of joy.

"I missed it," she said, "but I thought that it must have fallen off in the boat, or as Roger carried me thence to the castle. See, Roger," she said, holding it out to them, "this is my dowry. I told you I should not come to you a penniless bride, but I have thought lately that I was mistaken. Maclutha, when she died, gave me all the jewels we carried away from the treasure-room at Tezcuco. I selected all the most valuable ones, and sewed them into this broad girdle, which I put on under my things on the night when you escaped. Its loss has grieved me, though you have said that the two little bags you have already would suffice to make you rich; still they were Maclutha's, and I wanted to give you mine, but I could not think what had become of the belt."

"I found it on you, Aménche, when we loosened your robe to examine your wound, and put it by to give to you or Roger, which ever might recover; and now I am glad to hand it over as your joint property. I have already returned Roger his own two little bags that he had given me to take care of. And now farewell to you both. You will think of me sometimes in your distant home in England?" And Malinche, bursting into tears, hurried away.

The journey to the coast was an easy one, as the sick were all transported on litters carried by native porters. The bracing air of the high land did much to restore the strength of the sick men, who had been suffering much from the terrible heat of the valley. The officer in command of the convoy halted them for a week on the *Tlacotal* plateau, in order that they might get the full benefit of the cool air; and by the time they reached the coast, and were carried on board ship, Roger felt his strength fast returning. A comfortable cabin was assigned to him and Aménche, as Cortez had at Malinche's request written a letter specially commending them to the care of the officer in command of the ship. The voyage to Spain was a long one; and, before the vessel arrived at Cadiz, Roger and Aménche were completely restored to health and strength.

Roger's success, indeed, had been beyond his wildest hopes. The two bags of jewels and those which Aménche had brought

away with her would suffice to make him a very rich man. He had, too, an assortment of the finest Mexican stuffs, which Malinche had given him as a special present for his friends at home; and he had a bar of gold, of the value of a thousand pounds, which was his share (as one of Cortez's body-guard) of the gold found at the capture of the capital.

He had learnt from a vessel which was spoken as they neared Spain that England and Spain were in alliance against France; and he had no doubt, therefore, that he should find English ships at Cadiz. His heart was gladdened as the vessel entered the port by seeing the English flag flying on several vessels in harbour.

As soon as Roger and his companions landed they were surrounded by an eager crowd, all anxious to learn more of the capture of Mexico, of which a swift vessel sent off as soon as the city fell had brought news six weeks earlier; and Roger had to tell the story of the siege a dozen times over.

As soon as he could get free from the crowd, he went to a money-changer's, and obtained Spanish gold in exchange for his bar; then he purchased at a clothier's a suit of garments of Spanish fashion, and putting these on was able to move about without attracting observation. Aménche did not disembark until after nightfall, but Roger's first care after landing was to purchase a chestful of garments fit for a Spanish lady of rank, and to send them out to the vessel. Having sent these off he made his way down to the port, and, enquiring among the sailors, found that an English ship would sail on the following day. Hiring a boat, he went on board. He determined to maintain his character as a Spaniard to the last, as he would thereby avoid all questions; and it was accordingly in that language that he arranged for a passage for himself and his wife, the captain taking him for a Spanish gentleman having business with the Court in London.

Having settled this Roger returned on board, and late in the evening was rowed with Aménche to the English ship, which was to sail early the next morning. The wind was favourable, and the ship made a quick passage. The captain and sailors amused Roger by their comments on his appearance. Never, they agreed, had they seen a Spaniard of such size and strength before.

"He stands six-feet-three if he is an inch," an old sailor said, "and he is as broad as any man I ever saw. He is

never a bit like a Spaniard in appearance, with his blue eyes and light brown hair. If you were to put him in good English broadcloth, and teach him to talk like a Christian, no one would dream he was other than an Englishman. The Spaniards generally have solemn faces, but this chap looks as if he could laugh and joke with the best of us. One could almost swear that he understood what I am saying now."

Roger was several times tempted to say that he did understand, but he kept his counsel. As soon as they landed near London Bridge they went to an inn, and when the sailors who had carried his trunk for him had left, he addressed the landlord in English.

"Can you direct me to a clothier where I can obtain suitable clothes?" he said. "I have been staying in Spain, and having been wrecked and lost all my outfit had to rig myself in Spanish fashion. I also wish to purchase clothing of English fashion for my wife."

"I thought you were an Englishman by your looks," the landlord said, "though the fashion of your clothes was altogether foreign, and you speak, too, with a strange accent." For indeed, Roger found the English words come with difficulty, after having for nearly six years spoken nothing but Mexican and Spanish.

"I have been some time away," he said; "and have been talking with the Spaniards until I have well-nigh forgotten my own tongue."

Two hours later, he was attired in the fashion of a well-to-do merchant, and Aménche made, as he told her, the prettiest wife merchant ever had. They stayed for a week in London, Aménche being greatly amused and interested in all she saw. At the end of that time, having purchased a stout horse and a sword to defend himself against any robbers he might meet with on the way, Roger started to ride down to Plymouth, with Aménche behind him on a pillion. Six days after leaving London they entered the town, and Roger, having seen Aménche comfortably bestowed at the principal inn, took his way to the house of Master Diggory Beggs. The latter was in his shop, and came forward, bowing, as Roger entered it.

"What can I do for you to-day, good sir?" he said. "I have goods of all sorts and kinds: Italian work and Spanish; silks, and satins, and velvets."

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"I would have a talk with you alone, Master Beggs. I am the bearer of a message from an old friend of yours. If you will grant me a few minutes' talk we may do business together."

"By all means," the merchant said, thinking that such an introduction offered some important transactions. "Will you be good enough to follow me?" and he led the way upstairs.

Dame Mercy was sitting at work with her youngest daughter when they entered the room, Diggory saying, "Please to leave, Dame; this gentleman and I have business of importance to discuss together."

"There is no occasion for you to leave us," Roger said. "My business is not so private but that you and Mistress Agnes may hear us."

"You know my daughter's name!" Dame Beggs exclaimed in surprise.

"The gentleman comes with a message from an old friend of ours," Diggory said, "and has doubtless heard him mention our daughter's name."

"And Dorothy," Roger asked; "she is well, I hope."

"My eldest daughter was married three months since," Dame Mercy replied.

Roger gave an exclamation of satisfaction. "And so none of you know me?" he asked. "And yet you are but little changed, except that Mistress Agnes has grown into a young woman, whereas she was but a child when I parted from her."

Diggory Beggs and his wife gazed at Roger in astonishment; Agnes stood up with her hands tightly clasped together:—

"It is Roger," she cried. "Oh, mother! it is Roger come back to us."

"I am Roger, sure enough, aunt," he said, stooping and kissing her, and then shaking hands with his uncle and kissing Agnes.

"And your father," Diggory asked, "and the *Swan*?"

"It is a sad story," Roger said, "a very sad story, uncle. Six years ago the *Swan* was wrecked on the coast of Tabasco, and every soul save myself lost."

It was a blow for Diggory Beggs. He had, indeed, long since given up all hope of ever seeing his cousin Reuben, or of obtaining any return for the capital he had embarked on the *Swan*; but the sight of Roger had for a moment raised his hopes that the venture had after all been productive. However, he speedily recovered himself:—

"I am grieved to hear it, Roger, though in no ways surprised. For two years we looked for your return, but we have all long since given up hope, and written off our shares in the *Swan* as lost money. I am sorry for Reuben, very sorry, for I loved him like a brother. Well, well, do not let us talk about it now. You are restored to us safe and sound; and though the loss was a heavy one and crippled me for a time, I have got over it. Now tell us what have you been doing ever since; and by what miracle have you returned safe and sound?"

"It is a long story, uncle, a very long story; but before I begin it, I may tell you that, though the ship and its venture were lost, I myself have returned by no means penniless; and can, indeed, repay to the full all the money expended upon the *Swan* and her outfit. Now I want you all to come round with me to the inn, for there I have left a lady whom I would fain introduce to you."

"Your wife?" Mistress Mercy cried. "You don't say you have brought home a wife, Roger?"

"That do I, aunt. She is a princess in her own country; but what is much better she is the dearest of women, and all but gave her life to save mine."

Mistress Mercy looked grave, and was about to speak when Roger interrupted her.

"I know what you are about to say, aunt. The thought of having a foreign woman for your niece is shocking to you. Never mind, leave it unsaid until you have seen her. But as we go let us call in and see Dorothy, and take her on with us; I should wish her to be one of the first to welcome my wife."

Dorothy was as astonished as the others had been when they arrived at her house with Roger, and cast a meaning glance at him when she heard that he had brought home a wife.

"I know what you are thinking of, Dorothy—our parting on the *Hoe*." Dorothy laughed. "I meant it when I said it, Dorothy and meant it for a good time afterwards. It was only when it seemed that I should never come back again that I fell in love with some one else; and when you have heard my story, and know what she did for me, and how much I owe her, and come to love her for herself, you won't blame me."

"I don't blame you one bit, Roger," she said, frankly. "When you went away we thought we cared for each other; but of course we were only boy and girl then, and when

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I grew up and you did not come home, and it seemed that you never would come home, as you say, I fell in love with some one else. And now I will put on my hood, and come round and see your wife. What is her name?"

"Her name is Amenche," Roger said; "and Amenche I mean to call her. When she was christened—for of course she had to be christened before we were married—Father Olmedo said she must have a Christian name, and christened her Caterina; but for all that her name is Amenche, and we mean to stick to it. But come along; she has been an hour alone in this strange place already, and must begin to think that I have run away from her."

Dorothy and Agnes were at once won by the soft beauty of the dark-skinned princess; and when that evening Roger told the story of all that had taken place in Mexico, Dame Mercy's last prejudice vanished, and she took Amenche in her arms and kissed her tenderly.

"My dear," she said, "Roger has always been as a son to me, and henceforth you will be as one of my daughters."

As to Diggory, his delight and satisfaction were almost too great for words. He was overjoyed that Roger had returned, vastly gratified that the money he expended on the *Swan* was to be repaid, and greatly captivated by Amenche. The princess could speak but a few words of English, for Roger had been afraid to commence her tuition in that language until they were safely in England: but she was greatly pleased with the welcome she received, and began for the first time to feel that some day she might come to regard this strange country as home.

There was a long talk between Roger and his uncle as to the steps that should be taken. It was agreed that now Spain and England were so closely allied, it would be imprudent in the extreme to allow it to become known that the *Swan* had sailed for the Western Indies, or that Roger had obtained wealth there; for if it came to the ears of the Court—and such strange news would travel fast—it might well be that a ruinous fine might be imposed upon all concerned in the matter.

Therefore it was arranged that nothing whatever should be said about it, but that it should be given out that the *Swan* had been wrecked in foreign parts; and that Roger, who had been sole survivor of the wreck, had settled abroad and made money there, and had married a foreign lady. More than that it

would be unnecessary to tell. The gems could be sent over a few at a time to Amsterdam, and there sold to merchants who would care nothing whence they came; and the partners of Diggory Beggs in the venture of the *Swan* would be only too glad to receive their money back again, and to ask no questions as to how it had been obtained. And so matters were carried out.

For some months Roger remained in nominal partnership with his uncle, and then bought a large estate a few miles out of the town, where he set up as a country gentleman. He was for a time somewhat shyly looked upon by the magistrates of the county, who deemed it an unheard-of thing for a Plymouth merchant thus to settle among them; but in time he was accepted, especially after it became known that when he went up to Town he held his place among the highest there, and kept a state and expenditure equal to that of many of the nobles. His wife was remarkable not only for her beauty but for the richness of her jewels, many of which were fashioned in a way such as had never before been seen at the English Court. As time went on, and the relations between England and Spain grew cold, there was no longer any occasion for secrecy, and little by little it became known that the *Swan* had sailed to the Spanish main, that Roger had formed one of the conquering band of Cortez, and that Amenche was not a Spaniard but an Aztec Princess. This caused a great talk at the time, and added much to the consideration in which Roger was held. He took a leading position in the country, and many years after fitted out two ships at his own cost to fight against the Spanish Armada. Happily Amenche's health never suffered from the change to the comparatively cold climate of Devonshire. She bore Roger several children, and to this day many of the first families in Devonshire are proud that there runs in their veins the blood of the Aztec princess.

THE END.

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